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The works of John Angell James

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

VOL. VIII.

ADDRESSED TO MINISTERS.

LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.
MDCCCLXI.

DISCOURSES ADDRESSED TO MINISTERS

BY

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"An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times," (first published in 1847,) is here followed by shorter pieces of a kindred nature, so as to form a volume for the special use of Ministers, notwithstanding that repetitions of thoughts and illustrations will be discovered in them now that they are thus brought together. The letters, reprinted from the "Evangelical Magazine," may perhaps be considered superseded by the longer works, but they seemed so worthy of being preserved, that the Editor could not make up his mind to omit them, and the volume contains an extra number of pages.

The same volume of the Magazine contains a letter from the Author, on his plan of holding meetings such as described at pages 329 and 378; but it contains little either of information or remark which will not be found there.

The Author read at the meeting of the Congregational Union, in the autumn of 1845, a paper on the state of the Ministry in the Denomination, which produced a great impression on those who heard it; but it was never intended to be printed. Another of the pieces here given was read before the Union at a subsequent meeting. The circumstance of his having been appointed to prepare these addresses, gives additional weight to his opinions on these subjects.

Many of the Author's other writings also bear upon the Ministerial character and life. No man ever more entirely gave himself up to the duties of the office, studied it more deeply, or had better opportunities for observing the men sustaining it in his own denomination. He entered into all its duties, dangers, joys, and sorrows, and has left warnings and counsels in reference to each of them.

He asserted the rights of Ministers, and appealed to the churches on their behalf, in his Church Member's Guide, his Christian Professor, and his Sermon at Mr Mather's settlement.

His Charges to his brother at the beginning of his own ministry, and to his co-pastor at the end of it, gave not so much his own theory, or the fruits of his reading on the subject, as the details of what he was doing or had done, and the results of his own experience, expressed with all the anxiety inspired by his connection with the persons addressed.

His Sermon on Ministerial Activity counselled men bearing with him the heat and burden of the day. The fact that the Staffordshire Ministers (no doubt at the suggestion of his friend Mr Scales,) went out of their county to invite him at the age of twenty-nine to address them at the formation of their Association, proves how soon he acquired that standing among his brethren which he preserved until his death.

But his printed sermons and addresses on the deaths of ministers, by the variety of the facts and characters enumerated, afforded him the best opportunities to delineate all the more important varieties of the ministerial character, and to deduce from each its appropriate lesson.

Mr Berry, after being pastor of a large church in London, and Classical Tutor at Homerton, retired in failing health to his patrimony in his native town, and in order to employ himself in his old age, undertook to relieve the Author, then a very young man, from his afternoon sermon.

Dr. Bogue also was a tutor, and the Author was his pupil, but his forte was in directing the councils of societies, and advocating their cause before the public (he died on a deputation from the Missionary Society); and the Author always spoke of his talents as sufficient to have qualified him, with due training, for any post in Church or State.

Mr Weaver, Mr Swan, and Mr Jerard were all ministers in large towns, who gained the love of their flocks and the respect of their fellow-citizens, by their blameless lives and the faithful and consistent discharge of their office until old age. Two of them were most suddenly removed to their reward.

Mr Keynes was the Author's brother-in-law, a man of great power of mind and of good acquirements, for half a century pastor and schoolmaster in a small country town, the place of the Author's birth. His removal was by a lingering disease undermining his mental as well as his bodily strength.

Mr Jay had longer than any of his contemporaries maintained his hold on the public mind, both as a preacher and an author, and his residence in Bath brought him in contact with the higher classes to an extent very unusual with a Dissenting minister. He died almost the last of his generation.

Dr. McAll is the minister most frequently referred to in the Author's writings, and no one who ever heard the Doctor will wonder at this, for in imagination and subtle disquisition he as far surpassed other preachers, as Shakespeare surpassed other poets, and like him, he seemed to enlarge the powers and provinces of man's thought. Such a comparison, even in this place, may perhaps be permitted to a Warwickshire man.

In the cases of Mrs Sherman and Mrs Redford, the Author had to speak of ministers' wives, one able above her sex, and taking part in her husband's labours, the other contenting herself with the admirable discharge of her home duties.

In his Sermon at the Centenary of the Bristol Tabernacle, and in that prepared for the Congregational Union, on occasion of the "Rivulet" Controversy, he dilates on the spirit which should actuate the minister, the doctrines which he must hold, and the manner and method of his preaching them.

In his Addresses at his own Jubilee, and in "Grateful Recollections," he gives the results of his own ministerial life, and the methods he had adopted to serve his God and his generation, and the mercies with which his labours had been crowned.

In his Sermon at Mr Gawthorne's Jubilee, he depicted the cares and trials of aged ministers, and their claims to kindness and consideration, and seized the opportunity of urging the Denomination to devise some plan by which aged ministers might be able to retire from their charges in comfort to themselves, and to the advantage of their people.

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AN EARNEST MINISTRY

THE

WANT OF THE TIMES.

PREFACE.

Has the modern evangelical pulpit lost, and is it still losing, any of its power? This is a question far too momentous to be asked in the spirit of mere curiosity, or to be answered in unreflecting and ignorant haste. An affirmative reply involves consequences so deeply and so painfully affecting the eternal welfare of mankind, as well as the cause of orthodoxy, that it should not be given except upon indubitable evidence; while on the other hand, a negative answer would, if the evil really exists, only perpetuate it, by superseding all measures for correcting it which might remain in our power.

In settling this question, it is necessary to define what is meant by the loss of the power of the pulpit. If it is intended to ask whether evangelical ministrations have lost any of their attractiveness in drawing people together to hear them, it may be unhesitatingly affirmed that they have not; for perhaps there never were such numbers found listening to the glad tidings of salvation as at the present time. The true meaning of the inquiry then is, whether the modern pulpit has lost any of its efficiency as regards the great ends for which the gospel is preached; that is, the conversion of sinners,

and the spiritual advancement of believers. In coming to a right conclusion upon this matter, another question must be proposed and answered; with what past period of history the present is to be compared. If we go back to the time of Baxter, Howe, Owen, Bates, Manton, and Charnock, there can be little reason to believe that the moderns preach with the same results that they did. As little can it be questioned that Whitfield and Wesley, with the men called out by their labours, both in the Church of England and among Nonconformists, proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God with more power and success than the preachers of the present day. It is better, therefore, to limit the inquiry to the last quarter of a century, and to state it thus; does the preaching of the gospel now, taking all evangelical denominations into the investigation, appear to be followed with the same saving and sanctifying results, as it was then; and if not, does there appear to be a progressive diminution of its effect still going on?

This is a question for the solution of which we must depend pretty much upon general reports, not having accurate statistics relating to it. It may be asked then, whether this want of efficiency is not matter of acknowledgment and lamentation by all evangelical bodies? True it is, that, to a certain extent, similar acknowledgments and lamentations have been made in every age, by ministers of all denominations. But the admission now referred to is made chiefly by those who compare themselves with themselves; and their success at the present time, with their own success in past time. There are concurrent confessions by the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists of the United States, that there is a deadness in all their

churches, that revivals are rare, and conversions few, and the power of godliness among professing Christians is low, among them. The Methodist body in the United Kingdom reported last year (1846) but an increase of about seven hundred members, and this year a decrease of five thousand. The evangelical clergy of the Church of England lament the rarity of conversions by their preaching, and confess that the power of Venn, Romaine, Cecil, and Newton, seems wanting to their successors. The Baptists and Independents have no better report to make. Dr. Chalmers, in a late article in the North British Review, in speaking of Scotland, and that at a time when the disruption of the Presbyterian Establishment might have been supposed to have given new activity to the ministry of the Free Church at least, uses the following mournful language: "As things stand at present, our creeds and confessions have become effete; and the Bible a dead letter; and the orthodoxy which was at one time the glory, by withering into the inert and lifeless, is now the shame and reproach of all our churches." This is strong language, and a startling opinion. But the most melancholy thing connected with it is its truth.

Assuming then the fact that the modern evangelical pulpit has lost and is losing something of its power in converting sinners and carrying forward the spiritual life of believers, it surely becomes us all to reflect upon the painful fact with the deepest seriousness, and to endeavour, with the most intense anxiety, to discover its cause. It would ill become us in a spirit of antinomian indolence or fanaticism to resolve the whole matter into Divine sovereignty, and to say, "God wills it." With the same propriety, and on as good ground,

might the impenitent sinner be satisfied with his condition, and trace it up to a withholding of the influence necessary for his conversion. That there is a suspension of Divine influence must be admitted, if there be a diminished result; but as the Spirit works by appropriate means, may not this very suspension itself be traced up to some fault of the preachers themselves? Would not a different order of means, or more energy in the use of them, lead to a removal of this suspension of the Spirit's power? The question for us to ask in all seriousness and prayerful examination, is this: Does the diminished power of the pulpit arise from a diminished adaptation of the pulpit to the state of the people; or is the lamented deficiency to be traced up exclusively to the circumstances of the times that are now passing over us? Something, no doubt, may be set down to both these causes.

This, then, is a matter that concerns all, and deeply concerns all; for the tendency of decline is always downward; what is weak will become weaker, if not arrested in its progress.

There is another consideration which may account for the diminished effect of the pulpit, and that is an increased power of the press and of Sunday schools. At one time the preacher had the public mind almost to himself. There were indeed Bibles, schools, and tracts; but how few and uninfluential compared with what they are in the present day! Evangelical truth now comes before the million in every possible variety of form; the child learns his lessons from the Sunday-school teacher, and the poorest adult reads it at home in the tract and the penny magazine; and though this is a help in one respect to the preacher, it takes from him all the

advantage which novelty of representation, and something approaching an exclusive hold on the public, once gave him; for he has been forestalled on every topic by the living voice of the Sunday-school teacher, and the silent exhortations of the tract. These auxiliary means of conversion will, however, never supersede the pulpit, if the pulpit does not allow itself to be superseded; and it is evident that such competitors should increase its labours to be, what God ever intended it to be, his power to the salvation of men. That the pulpit has nothing to fear from the increase of religious knowledge by the Sunday school and the press, is evident from the fact that as science multiplies its treatises, and cheapens them down to the poorest pocket, it multiplies in equal proportion its public lecturers.

The facts thus briefly noticed will account for, and perhaps be admitted to justify, the appearance of the volume which this preface is intended to introduce. We live in an earnest age, and nothing but an earnest ministry can hope to succeed in it. When honoured by an invitation to preach last year the anniversary sermon for Cheshunt College, the author found his subject in this conviction. The publication of the discourse then preached was solicited at the time of its delivery; but as it was given to the world pretty fully in the Patriot, he abandoned all thoughts of complying with the request, though so kindly preferred. His attention was, however, called again to the subject, and his resolution changed, by the solicitation of the distinguished minister who presides with so much wisdom and dignity over that collegiate institution; and who, to all his other works, so rich in practical piety, has added another of a very different kind, which, while it lays the

world under deep obligations to its author, will associate the name of Dr. Harris with the most profound religious philosophers of any age or country. May his valuable life be spared to complete that magnificent series of treatises, which, with such adventurous but well-balanced intellect, he has projected, and of which the volume lately issued is but the commencement!

When revising his manuscript for publication, the author found that it admitted of more expansion and amplification than at first struck him; and he resolved, as soon as he could find time for it, to prepare a small treatise which should have a better chance of living than an ephemeral pamphlet. The subject grew under his hand, and has at length swelled into this volume.

But in undertaking to become, especially at such length, the counsellor of his brethren, he can scarcely acquit himself of the charge of presumption. He feels that he has little claim upon the attention of his fellow-labourers in the ministry, even the youngest of them. True it is that he has now arrived at an age when he takes his place among fathers; but years do not always teach wisdom. It is no less true that he has now laboured two and forty years in the ministry of the word, and has had no very limited opportunity of observing in others, and of discovering experimentally, what contributes to ministerial acceptableness and usefulness; still he can truly say, without a grain of vanity concealed under a simulated modesty, that he offers the present treatise to the notice of his brethren with fear and trembling. He knows that what is offered to them should, both as to matter and manner, be worthy of their attention; and had he to sustain a literary reputation for which he was jealous, he would feel still

more solicitude about the reception of his work; yet as he aims at nothing but usefulness, without making any pretensions to a finished style, he can only express a hope that they may not deem this offering unworthy their attention, and respectfully ask them to accept it as an affectionate endeavour to aid their usefulness, made in his own way. God has helped him to do something for his cause, and knowing how that has been done, he is anxious to draw others into the same way. And now that his shadow lengthens on the plain, and his eye is fixed on the declining sun, he feels, in the review of life, that the thought of having done any thing to save souls from death gives him far more delight than he could have derived from having made the largest acquirements in learning and science, or from having gained a reputation for genius and taste. There is a time coming to every man when the knowledge of having been the instrument of plucking a single brand from the eternal burning, will yield him more real satisfaction than the certainty of having accomplished the loftiest objects of literary ambition.

The author anticipates a remark which will be made by many of the readers of this volume, that it is in some measure, a book of extracts. They will, however, have little cause to complain of this, since what he has given from the stores of other men's thoughts is much better than any thing he could have brought from his own. Besides, in so important a matter as advice to the ministry, he was anxious to be sustained in what he advanced, by the authority of men whose names and counsels would carry far more weight than his own. Be it so that the book presents the appearance of mosaic work; the author is quite content that

his own part of the volume should be the setting of stones so precious.

There will be found some repetitions of thought, and even of expression in the work; and this was hardly to be avoided from the nature of the subject. It is a poor excuse for imperfections, to plead the want of time for correcting them; and yet it is the best excuse the author has to make for the many that will be found in his little volume. His situation exposes him to a thousand vexatious interruptions, which many in more retired nooks never suffer. These pages have been written amidst such abounding and various occupations, that they could be composed only during snatches of time redeemed from other duties, and in brief intervals of busy activity. But if this effort should do nothing more than draw the attention of writers in our reviews and magazines, as well as of our more able authors, to a renewed consideration of that most vital point, our ministry, it will, however humble its pretensions and low its merits, have accomplished a high and holy work.

April, 1847.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

It is not with vanity, but gratitude, that the author of this volume refers to the fact of a third edition of it having been called for within six months after the publication of the first: and he willingly and joyfully considers this rapid sale rather as an indication of the deep interest taken in the subject, than as a proof of approbation of the manner in which it has been here treated. Scarcely anything could be a more hopeful sign of the times, religiously viewed, than this interest in a matter so deeply involving the eternal welfare of mankind, as that of an "Earnest Ministry." Whether the author has, or has not, ability to excite and guide this earnestness, it is evident, from the sale of his volume, that there is a prevailing disposition to consider the subject: and that multitudes are prepared to be moved to greater intensity of feeling and energy of action in their high and holy vocation, if any one can be found to give the impulse.

The author has had abundantly more than enough to gratify him, and to reward him for his labour, in the private acknowledgements he has received from various quarters, and in the notice which has been taken of his treatise by the periodicals; but he is

still anxious that the editors of our leading journals devoted to religious literature, should call some of their ablest writers to the subject, who would speak with a power and authority not possessed by his pen. Intently bent upon it himself, how gladly would he sink into the shadow of some of these gifted men, if they would come forward and fill the land and the age with a sense of the importance of a competent, energetic, and efficient ministry. One has already done much to accomplish this object; to Dr. Vaughan we stand indebted for his valuable work on the Modern Pulpit. May we soon see another contribution to it from his pen in the pages of the "British Quarterly!" The pulpit, notwithstanding the influence of the press, must still remain the main lever of the moral world; how much therefore does it become all those who are concerned for the spiritual interests of the community, to endeavour to augment the force of this so powerful engine. The friends of evangelical doctrine, and the advocates of orthodoxy, have the following objects to keep ever in view in this age; they must take care of their Bibles, that they be not mutilated or curtailed by lawless criticism; they must take care of their theology, that it be not perverted by false philosophy; and they must take care of their pulpits, that they be not occupied by heretical, unspiritual, or incompetent ministers.

October 19, 1847.

CHAPTER I.

THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v, 20.

In this truly wonderful passage, viewed in connection with its context, are set before us with beautiful simplicity, yet with surpassing grandeur, the theme, the design, and the method, of the Christian ministry. The theme is God reconciling the world to himself; a subject compared with which the negotiations of hostile nations and the treaties which put an end to the horrors of war, and bind in concord the fiercest passions of humanity, are matters of only momentary and limited importance. The design of the ministry, which is strictly in harmony with its theme, is to bring sinful men into actual reconciliation with God, on the ground of that system of mediation through Christ which God himself has devised and proclaimed. And its method is the earnestness of persuasion addressed to the rebel heart of man, in order to induce him to lay aside his enmity against his offended Sovereign, and to accept this offer of a gracious amnesty. The union and the harmony of these three views of the ministry are singularly

impressive: he who leaves out the great scheme of christian reconciliation from his habitual ministrations, omits the divinely appointed theme; he who does not supremely aim to bring sinners into a state of actual friendship with God, falls short of the design of the sacred office; and he who does not employ for the purpose all the arts and means of persuasion, mistakes or undervalues the divinely prescribed method of fulfilling its duties.

As the apostle is writing to a Christian church, it is perhaps a matter of surprise to some that he should entreat them to be reconciled to God, since by their very profession of religion they must have been supposed to be already in that state. Upon looking attentively at the passage as it stands in the Bible, the reader will perceive that the pronouns of the second person are in italics, intimating that they are not in the original Greek, but are supplied in our English translation to complete the sense; consequently any other word that would accomplish this better may be substituted for them. If therefore we put the substantive "men," instead of the pronoun "you" in the first clause of the verse, and the pronoun of the third person "them" for the pronoun of the second person "you" in the latter clause, we shall avoid the improbability of the apostle calling upon professing Christians to come into a state to which they must be supposed to have already attained, and the text will then show what he intended to set forth, the usual manner in which he discharged the functions of his momentous office. With this alteration it would read thus, "As ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech 'men' by us, we pray 'them' in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." It is as

if he had said, "wherever we go, we find men in unprovoked hostility, inveterate enmity, and mad rebellion, against God's holy nature, law, and government: we carry with us, as his ambassadors, the proclamation of mercy through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ: we tell them that we are appointed by God whom they have offended, and who could overwhelm them with the terrors of his justice, to call upon them to lay down their arms and accept the offer of eternal pardon and peace: but we find them every where so bent upon their sins, and the enjoyment of their worldly occupations and possessions, that we are compelled to use the language of the most vehement entreaty, and to beseech and implore them in God's name, and in Christ's stead, to come into a state of reconciliation."

The apostle not only used the most intense earnestness of entreaty, as an expression of his own concern, but he told the objects of his imploring anxiety that his importunity for their welfare was but an imitation of, and a substitute for, that of God himself; that his beseeching solicitation to them, on behalf of their own salvation, was uttered in Christ's stead. This is the most wonderful scene that the universe will ever witness; a beseeching God, an imploring Saviour, standing at the door of the sinner's heart with eternal salvation in his hand, knocking for entrance and begging to be let in; the insulted Omnipotent Creator of the universe, beseeching a worm, whom an exercise of his will could sink in a moment to perdition, and his justice be glorified in the act, to accept his pardoning mercy, and waiting year after year, in all long-suffering, for the sinner's reconsideration of his obstinate refusals. Be astonished, O heaven, at God's unutter-

able mercy, and be horribly afraid, O earth, at man's indescribable wickedness! Here is the climax of God's divine love, and man's desperate depravity. Divine benevolence did not reach its uttermost when Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross; that was reserved for the scene before us.

I might with ineffable delight expatiate at length on this scene of matchless mercy, but let me pass on to other applications of the passage appropriate to the subject before us. And what a view does it give us of the Christian ministry! It is an embassy from God to man, and therefore most dignified and honourable. I admit that it is only in a qualified sense that the title and office of an "ambassador" for Christ can be applied to the ordinary ministers of the gospel; but in a subordinate sense it may be applied to them, since they are ordained to do what he would do were he personally present; they are to propose the same blessings, to lay down the same terms of peace, as he would were he again on earth; and therefore are, so far, his ambassadors. And if the honour of an ambassador be in proportion to the power and glory of the sovereign who employs him, what is the dignity of him who is the ambassador of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and at the same time, what ought to be the sanctity of his conduct, and the elevation of his character? If nothing unworthy of the monarch who sends him, and the nation which he represents, should be done by him who is despatched on an embassy to a foreign court and people, how vigilant and solicitous to do nothing unworthy of God and his Christ, should he be whose business it is to negotiate with man the weighty affairs of judgment and of mercy from heaven! If he bears

the dignity of his office, let him associate with it a corresponding dignity of character. How natural, how just, how necessary, the reflection, "I am an ambassador for Christ; what manner of person ought I to be in all holy conversation and godliness; what should I be who represent, so far as my office is concerned, the majesty of heaven and earth!"

The ministry of the gospel is shown in this passage to be an embassy of peace: this is its very designation, "the ministry of reconciliation." Never was a more beautiful idea expressed or conceived: nothing could be devised to throw over the ministry the charm of greater loveliness. If in one hand the preacher of the gospel carry the sword of the Spirit, it is only to slay the sin; while he holds forth the olive branch in the other, as the token of peace and life to the sinner. He enters the scene of strife and discord to harmonize the jarring elements, and goes to the field of conflict to reconcile the contending parties. It is his to proclaim the treaty of man's peace with God, to explain its terms, to urge its acceptance, and to bring the sinner into friendship with his offended lawgiver; to carry peace into man's troubled bosom, and reconcile him to his own conscience; to cast out the enmity and prejudices of his selfish and depraved heart, and to unite him by charity to his fellows; to calm down the violence of his temper, and give him peace on earth, and at last to conduct him to the realms of undisturbed tranquillity in the celestial world. This is his business. Angels hover over him in his course, and chant over his labours their ancient song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;" redeemed men and women, saved by his instrumentality from the wrath

of God, and the turbulence of passion, hail him in the language of the prophet, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace;" while the Saviour himself pronounces upon him the beatitude, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Honoured and happy man, minister of reconciliation, friend and promoter of peace, the world knows thee not, because it knew not Christ; nor, perhaps, does even the church duly appreciate, or adequately reward, thy services; but even now thy work is its own reward: peace attends upon thy steps, and blessings spring up in thy path.

But still it is an embassy of difficulty. It is to treat with those who are unwilling to be saved, and to persuade the sinful, proud, and stubborn hearts of men to capitulate to holiness and grace. The minister carries the offer of infinite and ineffable blessedness, but it is to men who have no taste for that species of felicity. His were an easy office did he find men every where predisposed to close with the proposals of infinite benevolence; but wherever he goes he meets with hearts not only indifferent, but hostile, to his message. The parable which represents the excuses made for not coming to the marriage feast, is still applicable to the children of men in reference to the invitations of the gospel: men are as they ever were, too busy, or too well satisfied with their enjoyments and possessions, to care about salvation. They are madly set upon the objects of the present world; they are asleep, and need to be roused; careless, and need to be interested; indolent, and need to be stimulated; and it is with the greatest difficulty we can engage their attention to the invisible realities

of eternity. No one who leaves out of view the desperate wickedness of the human heart, can form a true estimate of the nature, design, and difficulties of the ministerial office: and the reason why there is so little of hard labour, and intense earnestness, and beseeching entreaty, in the ministers of the gospel, is, that there is the want of a deep conviction, or proper consideration, of the resistance to their endeavours in the sinner's heart, which is perpetually meeting them.

This brings me to the subject of the present discourse, and that is the necessity of an earnest ministry. Nothing less than earnestness can succeed in any cases of great difficulty, and the earnestness must of course be in proportion to the difficulty to be surmounted. Great obstacles cannot be overcome without intense application of the mind. How then can the work of the ministry be accomplished? Every view we can take of it replies, "Only by earnestness." Every syllable of the apostle's language replies, "Only by earnestness." Every survey we can take of human nature replies, "Only by earnestness." Every recollection of our own experience, as well as every observation we can make of the experience of others, replies, "Only by earnestness." This, this is what we want, and must have, if the ends of the gospel are ever to be extensively accomplished, an earnest ministry.

We have heard much of late about a learned ministry, and God forbid we should ever be afflicted by so great an evil as an unlearned one. We have been often reminded of the necessity of an educated ministry; and in this case, as in every other, men must be educated for their vocation; but then that education must be strictly appropriate and specific. We are very properly

told from many quarters, we can do nothing without a pious ministry. This is very true, nor can any truth bearing upon this subject be more momentous; for of all the curses which God ever pours from the vials of his wrath upon a nation which he intends to scourge, there is not one so fearful as giving them up to an unholy ministry. And I trust our churches will ever consider piety as the first and most essential qualification in their pastors, for which talents, genius, learning, and eloquence, would and could be no substitutes. It will be a dark and evil day when personal godliness shall be considered as secondary to any other quality in those who serve at the altar of God. But still there is something else wanted in addition to natural talent, to academic training, and even to the most fervent evangelical piety, and that is, intense devotedness. This is the one thing, more than any or all other things, that is wanting in the modern pulpit, and that has been wanting in most ages of the Christian church. The following sentence occurs in a valuable article in a late number of the British Quarterly Review: "No ministry will be really effective, whatever may be its intelligence, which is not a ministry of strong faith, true spirituality, and deep earnestness." I wish this golden sentence could be inscribed in characters of light over every professor's chair, over every student's desk, and over every preacher's pulpit. Condensed into that one short paragraph is every thing that needs be said on this subject. I feel that every syllable I have to write would be superfluous, if all our pastors, students, and tutors, would let that one sentence take full occupation of their hearts, possess their whole souls, and regulate their conduct. The most I can hope to accomplish is to expand and enforce it.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF EARNESTNESS.

Perhaps there is scarcely one single phrase more frequently employed, or better understood, in the sphere of human activity, than this, "Be in earnest." What distinctness of aim, what fixedness of purpose, what resoluteness of will, what diligence, patience, and perseverance in action, are implied or expressed in these three words. He who would stimulate indolence, quicken activity, and inspire hope; he who would breathe his own spirit into the soul of another, and excite there the enthusiasm which glows in his own bosom, says to his fellow, "Be in earnest:" and that short sentence, a scintillation flying off from a burning mind, has often in lighting upon another spirit, kindled the flames of enthusiasm in it also. And what else, or what less, does Jesus Christ say to every one whom he sends into the work of the Christian ministry than, "Be in earnest?"

There is something in the aspect and power of earnestness, whatever be its object, that is impressive and commanding. A man who has selected some one object of pursuit, and then yielded up himself to the desire of its attainment, with a devotion admitting of no reserve, a steadiness of aim allowing of no

diversion, a diligence consenting neither to rest nor intermission; and who ever retains this purpose so far uppermost in his heart as to fill his conversation, and so entirely and constantly before his mind as to throw into its broad shadow every other subject of consideration; such an instance of decision, amounting to a ruling passion, gains a strange fascination over the feelings of others, and exerts over us, while witnessing it, an influence which we feel to be contagious. We involuntarily sympathise with a man who is thus carried away by his fervour; and if all his earnestness is for the promotion of our interests, its effect is irresistible. That man must be a stone, and destitute of the ordinary feelings of humanity, who can see another, interested, active, and zealous for his welfare, while he himself remains inert and indifferent. Even the apathetic and indolent have been kindled into ardour, and led to make efforts for themselves, by solicitude manifested by others for their welfare.

How strictly does this apply to the ministry of God's word, which relates to the most momentous matters that can engage the attention of the human understanding. Sympathy is a law of our mental being which has never been sufficiently taken into account in estimating the influences which God employs for the salvation of men. There is a silent and almost unconscious process often going on in the minds of those who are listening to the sermons of a preacher really labouring for the conversion of souls. "Is he so earnest about my salvation, and shall I care nothing about the matter? Is my eternal happiness so much in his account, and shall it be nothing in mine? I can meet cold logic with counter arguments; or at any

rate, I can raise up objections against evidence. I can smile at the artifices of rhetoric, and be merely pleased with the displays of eloquence. I can sit unmoved under sermons which seem intended by the preacher to raise my estimate of himself, but I cannot stand this earnestness about me. The man is evidently intent upon saving my soul. I feel the grasp of his hand upon my arm, as if he would pluck me out of the fire. He has not only made me think, but he has made me feel. His earnestness has subdued me."

But it will be necessary now to meet and answer the question, What is meant by an earnest ministry?

I. In the first place then, earnestness implies, the selection of some one object of special pursuit, and a vivid perception of its value and importance. It is next to impossible for the mind to be intently employed, or the heart to be very deeply engaged, on a multiplicity of objects at once. We have not energy enough to be so divided and distributed. Our feelings to run with force must flow pretty much in one channel: our attention must be concentrated, our purpose settled, our energy exerted, upon one thing, or we can do nothing effectually. The earnest man is a man of one idea, and that one idea occupies possesses and fills his soul. To every other claimant upon his time, and interest, and labour, he says, "Stand by; I am engaged, I cannot attend to you; something else is waiting for me." To that one thing he is committed. There may be many subordinate matters amongst which he divides any surplus water, but the current flows through one channel, and turns one great wheel. This "one thing I do," is his plan and resolution. Many wonder at his choice, many condemn it: no matter, he understands

it, approves it, and pursues it, notwithstanding the ignorance which cannot comprehend it, and the diversity of taste which cannot admire it. He is no double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, whose preference and purpose are shaken by every cross gale of opinion. It is nothing to him what others do, or what they say as to what he does: he must do that, whatever else he leaves undone. No one can be in earnest who has not thus made up his mind; and he who has, and is resolutely bent upon an object, keeps it constantly before his mind; his attention is so strongly and tenaciously fixed upon it, that even at the greatest distance, "like the Egyptian pyramids to travellers, it appears to him with a luminous distinctness, as if it were nigh, and beguiles the toilsome length of labour and enterprise by which he must reach it." It is so conspicuous before him that he does not deviate a step from the right direction, he ever hears a voice calling him onward, and every movement and every day brings him nearer to the end of his journey. Break in upon him at any moment, you know where you will find him and how he will be employed.

This is the first part of the description of an earnest minister: he too has selected his object, and made up his mind concerning it, and insulating it from all others, sets it clearly and distinctly before his mind; and what is it? What should it be? Not science, or literature, or philosophy; not a life spent in the acquisition of knowledge, or the gratification of taste; not the power of adding to the treasures of knowledge or learning accumulated during ages, or to the elegancies which embellish civilized existence, and give amenity to social intercourse. The man who has entered the sacred office

merely to luxuriate in the haunts of the muses, has mistaken his vocation to the pulpit, and is no less guilty though somewhat less sordid than he who says, "Put me into the priest's office, that I may eat a morsel of bread." That a minister may to a certain extent indulge a literary or scientific taste, and that he may even make it subservient to a higher and more sacred object, is admitted. The pulpit has done, and is doing, much service in all the departments of learning and philosophy. It is in Christian countries that the valuable remains of Eastern, Greek, and Roman wisdom and eloquence have been preserved, studied, imitated, and sometimes even excelled. Christian nations have conducted philosophical inquiries with the best success, and improved them for the most useful and benevolent purposes.

"If these things are good and profitable unto society, a large portion of the honour of such usefulness belongs to men set for the defence of the gospel, desirous by sound reasoning to convince gainsayers, and conscious what arms human literature furnishes for this holy war. And then in addition to all this, consider the effect of the pulpit upon what might be called the popular mind. To thousands who have comparatively little leisure or opportunity to form their taste, and cultivate their rational powers, by conversation with the wise and enlightened, or by reading their works, a school is thus open, established indeed for higher purposes, where men of sound understandings, though low in rank, may without expense, and almost without intending it, learn from example to distinguish or connect ideas, to infer one truth from another, to examine the force of an argument, and so to arrange and express their sentiments as deeply to impress themselves and others. As in a few years the child gradually acquires the faculty of speaking his mother-tongue with a considerable degree of ease and fluency, without any formal lessons, merely by hearing it spoken, so there is a natural logic and rhetoric which some acquire without designing it, who go to church for nobler ends, whereby they are enabled to detect the cunning craftiness which the enemies of religion or of public tranquillity, lie

in wait to deceive. Indeed the culture of the talents and improvement of that respectable class of men who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, generally rises or falls in proportion to the character and genius of their religious discourses." *

This is as true as it is beautiful, and should remind all ministers of the gospel of the necessity and importance at all times, but especially in such times as these, of keeping in mind the collateral and secondary objects of pulpit instruction, and of preparing themselves for conducting it with power and efficiency. There is not a temporal interest of man as an individual, or a member of society, on which the sermons and general influence of the ministry may not be made to bear advantageously; but then it must never be forgotten that the things which have just been enumerated are at best only the incidental, secondary, and collateral benefits of the ministry of the word: they are among the many things that may be touched, but are not the one thing that must be grasped: they are little rills diverted from the main stream for the purposes of irrigation, but are not the river itself, bearing wealth and civilization to the nations between whom it rolls.

Nor is it the great object of our ministry merely to preside with dignity over the solemnities of public worship; to content ourselves and please our people with preparing and delivering two well studied discourses on the Sabbath; to keep all quiet and orderly in the church; to maintain a kind of religious respectability and intellectuality in the congregation. The end and aim of the ministry are to be gathered from the apostle's solemn and comprehensive language, "they watch for your souls as they that must give account." There in that

* Discourses by Dr. John Erskine.

short, but sublime and awful sentence, the end of the pastoral office is set before us. The design of the pulpit is identical with that of the cross: and the preacher is to carry out the design of the Saviour in coming to seek and to save that which was lost. Preaching and teaching are the very agency which Jesus Christ employs to save those souls for which he died upon Calvary. If souls are not saved, whatever other designs are accomplished, the great purpose of the ministry is defeated.

You are now prepared to understand what is the nature of real earnestness in a minister of Christ; a distinct, explicit, practical recognition of his duty to labour for the salvation of souls as the end of his office. Such a man has settled with himself that this is his vocation and business. He has looked at every thing else which can be presented to his mind, has weighed the claims of all, and with intelligence and firmness has said, and is prepared to stand by his affirmation, "I watch for souls." He thus understands his errand; he is under no mistake, no uncertainty, no confusion. He has entered into fellowship with God the Father in his eternal purpose of the salvation of the human race; with the Son in the end of his incarnation and death; and with the Holy Spirit in the intent of his coming down upon our desolate world. Of this salvation which is the object of his ministry, the prophets inquired; to accomplish it prophets preached, and angels ministered; and thus justified in his choice by the Triune God and the noblest of his creatures, he leaves far below him, in the aspirations and soarings of his ambition, the scholar, the philosopher, and the poet. He has taken up an object in reference to which, if he succeed but in a single instance, he will have achieved a triumph which will

endure infinite ages after the proudest monuments of human genius have perished in the conflagration of the world.

"The salvation of souls" as the great object of the ministerial office, is a generic phrase, including as its species, the awakening of the unconcerned; the guidance of the inquiring; the instruction of the uninformed; and the sanctification, comfort, and progress of those who through grace have believed; in short the whole work of grace in the soul. But the attention of the reader is directed to the first of these particulars as the most commanding object of ministerial solicitude, I mean the conversion of the unregenerate; and if without offending against the law of modesty I may refer to my own history, labours and success, I would observe, that I began my ministry, even as a student, with a strong desire after this object; and long before this, while yet a youth engaged in secular concerns, I had been deeply susceptible of the power of an awakening style of preaching, and had been wrought upon by the rousing sermons of Dr. Davies* of New Jersey. From that time to the present I have made the conversion of the impenitent the great end of my ministry, and I have had my reward. I have been sustained in this course by the remarks of Baxter, in his "Reformed Pastor," a long extract from which I must now be permitted to introduce.

* I wish these discourses were better known, and more imitated by our young ministers. They are admirable specimens of persuasive, hortatory, and impressive preaching, formed upon the model of Baxter. It is such preaching we want. In these striking discourses may be seen what I mean by earnest preaching. They are by no means scarce, and I would advise my younger brethren to buy and read them.

"We must labour in a special manner for the conversion of the unconverted. The work of conversion is the great thing we must drive at; after this we must labour with all our might. Alas! the misery of the unconverted is so great that it calleth loudest to us for compassion. If a truly converted sinner do fall, it will be but into sin which will be pardoned, and he is not in that hazard of damnation by it as others are. Not but that God hateth their sins as well as others, or that he will bring them to heaven, let them live ever so wickedly; but the spirit that is within them will not suffer them to live wickedly, nor to sin as the ungodly do. But with the unconverted it is far otherwise. They 'are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,' and have yet no part nor fellowship in the pardon of their sins, or the hope of glory. We have therefore a work of greater necessity to do for them, even 'to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified.' He that seeth one man sick of a mortal disease and another only pained with the tooth-ache, will be moved more to compassionate the former than the latter, and will surely make more haste to help him, though he were a stranger, and the other a brother or a son. It is so sad a case to see men in a state of damnation, wherein, if they should die, they are lost for ever, that methinks we should not be able to let them alone, either in public or private, whatever other work we have to do. I confess I am frequently forced to neglect that which should tend to the further increase of knowledge in the godly, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Who is able to talk of controversies, or of nice, unnecessary points, or even of truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent soever, while he seeth a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his eyes, who must be changed or damned? Methinks I even see them entering upon their final woe! Methinks I hear them crying out for help, for speediest help! Their misery speaks the louder, because they have not hearts to ask for help themselves. Many a time have I known that I had some hearers of higher fancies, that looked for rarities, and were addicted to despise the ministry if I told them not something more than ordinary; and yet I could not find in my heart to turn from the necessities of the impenitent for the humouring of them; nor even to leave speaking to miserable sinners for their salvation, in order to speak so much as should otherwise be done to weak saints for their confirmation and increase in grace. Methinks as Paul's 'spirit was stirred within

him,' when he saw 'the Athenians wholly given to idolatry,' so it should cast us into one of his paroxysms to see so many men in the greatest danger of being everlastingly undone. Methinks if by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it would more effectually untie our tongues than Crœsus' danger did his son's. He that will let a sinner go down to hell for want of speaking to him, doth set less by souls than did the Redeemer of souls; and less by his neighbour than common charity will allow him to do by his greatest enemy. O therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whatever you pass over, forget not poor souls that are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and who may look every hour for the infernal execution if a speedy change do not prevent it. O call after the impenitent, and ply this great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone!"

The editor of Baxter says:

"These powerful and impressive observations we cannot too earnestly recommend to the attention of ministers. We have no hesitation in saying that the most of preachers whom we have known were essentially defective in the grand and primary object of the Christian ministry, labouring for the conversion of souls. From the general strain of some men's preaching, one would almost be ready to conclude that there were no sinners in their congregations to be converted. In determining the proportion of attention which a minister should pay to particular classes of his congregation, the number of each class, and the necessities of their case, are unquestionably the principal considerations which should weigh with him. Now in all our congregations we have reason to fear the unconverted constitute by far the majority; their situation is peculiarly pitiable; their opportunities of salvation will soon be for ever over; their danger is not only very great, but very imminent; they are not secure from everlasting misery, even for a single moment. Surely then the unconverted demand by far the largest share of the christian minister's attention, and yet from many they receive but a very small share of attention; their case, when noticed at all, is noticed only, as it were, by the bye. This, no doubt, is a principal cause that amongst us there are so few conversions by the preaching of the word, and especially in the congregations of particular ministers. We feel this subject to be of such transcendent importance that we trust we shall be excused for here introducing a quotation connected

with it, from another work of our author, which has been introduced into the series of 'Select Christian Authors.'"

"It is not', says he, in his 'Mischiefs of Self-Ignorance,' 'a general dull discourse, or critical observations upon words, or the subtle decision of some nice and curious questions of the schools, nor is it a neat and well-composed speech, about some other distant matters, that is like to acquaint a sinner with himself. How many sermons may we hear that are levelled at some mark or other which is very far from the hearers' hearts, and therefore are never likely to convince them, or open and convert them! And if our congregations were in such a case as that they needed no closer quickening work, such preaching might be borne with and commended. But when so many usually sit before us that must shortly die, and yet are unprepared for death; and that are condemned by the law of God, and must be pardoned or finally condemned; that must be saved from their sins that they may be saved from everlasting misery; I think it is time for us to talk to them of such things as most concern them, and that in such a manner as may most effectually convince, awaken, and change them.

"A man that is ready to be drowned is not at leisure for a song or a dance; and a man that is ready to be hanged, methinks, should not find himself at leisure to hear a man show his wit and reading only, if not his folly and malice, against a life of holiness. Nor should you think that suitable to such men's case that doth not evidently tend to save them. But alas! how often have we heard such sermons as tend more to diversion than direction, to fill their minds with other matters, and find them something else to think of, lest they should study themselves, and know their misery! A preacher that seems to speak religiously by a dry, sapless discourse, that is called a sermon, may more plausibly and easily ruin him. And his conscience will more quietly suffer him to be taken off the necessary care of his salvation, by something that is like it, and pretends to do the work as well, than by the grosser avocations or the scorn of fools. And he will be more tamely turned from religion by something that is called religion, and which he hopes may serve the turn, than by open wickedness or impious defiance of God and reason. But how often do we hear sermons applauded, which force us in compassion to men's souls to think, 'O what is all this to the opening of a sinner's heart unto himself, and showing him his unregenerate state? What is this to the conviction of a self-deluding soul, that is passing into hell, with the confident expectations of

heaven? What is this to show men their undone condition, and the absolute necessity of Christ, and of renewing grace? What is in this to lead men up from earth to heaven, and to acquaint them with the unseen world, and to help them to the life of faith and love, and to the mortifying and pardon of their sins?' How little skill have many miserable preachers in the searching of the heart, and helping men to know themselves, whether Christ be in them, or whether they be reprobates? And how little care and diligence is used by them to call men to the trial, and help them in the examining and judging of themselves, as if it were a work of no necessity? 'They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, saith the Lord.'"

Oh what preachers we should be, could we drink into the spirit of these powerful passages! May God impress them on our hearts, and lead us to mould our discourses after their fashion. We should, however, by no means be unmindful of the importance of building up the believer on his holy faith. Not only must the children of the redeemed family be born, but they must also be fed, watched, guided, and nourished up to manhood. The growth of the heirs of immortality in grace and knowledge must be an object of deep solicitude with the faithful pastor. His children in the faith are not glorified as soon as converted, but are carried through a probation, and often a long one, of conflict, trial, and temptation; and it is his business, by the instrumentality of the truth, deeply searched, carefully expounded, and appropriately applied, to conduct them through the perplexities and the dangers of the divine life. Hence, therefore, it is the duty of the minister, not to be always dwelling on first principles, and teaching the mere alphabet of Bible knowledge, but to lead his people "on unto perfection;" yet still he is never to forget that by far the greater number of those who are before him do not experimentally know these first

principles, and have not learnt even this alphabet of practical piety. I once had a member of my church, who had been brought out of the literary world to a deep, experimental knowledge of divine truth. She was a woman of uncommonly fine and tasteful mind. After her conversion she dwelt for a season in London, and on her return from the metropolis, in giving an account of the various preachers she had heard, expressed her surprise and regret that their sermons, however excellent, seemed to be addressed almost exclusively to true believers, as if they took it for granted that their congregations were composed wholly of such, and contained none who were dead in trespasses and sins. And I know a devoted and consistent Christian, who, upon leaving a minister whom he had attended for several years, declared he had scarcely ever heard one thoroughly practical sermon from him during the whole time: there had been much doctrinal statement, much theological science, much religious comfort; but no vivid and pungent appeals either to saints or sinners: no wonder he knew of no conversions there: and yet this preacher is not an Antinomian.

II. Earnestness implies that the subject has not only been selected, but that it has taken full possession of the mind, and has kindled towards it an intense desire of the heart.

It is something more than a correct theory and logical deductions; more than mere exercise of the intellect, and the play of the imagination: earnestness means that the understanding having selected and appreciated its object, has pressed all the faculties of both mind and body to join in the pursuit of it. It urges the soul onward in its career of action at such a

speed that it is set on fire by the velocity of its own motion. The object of an earnest man is never for any long period of time absent from his thoughts. He meditates on it by day, and dreams of it by night: it meets him in his solitary walks as some bright vision which he loves to contemplate, and it comes over him in company with such power that he cannot avoid making it the topic of his conversation, till he appears in the eyes of those who have no sympathy with him, in the light of an enthusiast.

Foster, in his "Essay on Decision of Character," has alluded to Howard as supplying a fine illustration of this mental quality. I furnish one extract bearing more directly than perhaps any other on our present theme. It relates to the singular fact that this great philanthropist turned not a moment from his course, when traversing scenes most calculated to awaken curiosity, and to enkindle enthusiasm by the associations of ancient glory with which they are connected, even Rome itself.

"The importance of his object held his faculties in a state of excitement which was too rigid to be affected by lighter interests, and on which, therefore, the beauties of nature and art had no power: like the invisible spirits who fulfil their commission of philanthropy among mortals, and care not about pictures, statues, and sumptuous buildings. It implied an inconceivable severity of conviction that he had one thing to do; and that he who would do some great thing in this short life, must apply himself to the work with such a concentration of his forces, as, to idle spectators, who live only to amuse themselves, looks like insanity. It was thus he made the trial, so seldom made, what is the utmost effect which may be granted to the last possible effort of a human agent; and therefore what he did not accomplish, he might conclude to be placed beyond the sphere of mortal activity, and calmly leave to the disposal of Omnipotence."

There, again, is the representation of the really and

intensely earnest minister of Jesus Christ, and of the manner in which he regards the object of his ministry, the salvation of immortal souls. He has drunk in the inspiration of those inexpressibly sublime and solemn words, so often already quoted, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." This declaration has come over him like a spell, from the fascination of which he neither tries nor wishes to escape. Whether seated in his chair in his study, or carrying on the exercises of devotion in the closet, or preaching the gospel in the pulpit, or enjoying the pleasures of Christian friendship in the social circle, or recreating his energies amidst the beauties of creation, the words of Solomon stand conspicuously before his mind's eye, "He that winneth souls is wise." While, ever and anon, the thunder of Christ's awful inquiry comes pealing over his ear; "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" To be useful in converting souls is his constant and practical aim: and his texts are chosen, his sermons are composed and delivered, and his language, figures, and illustrations are selected, with a view to this. That word, usefulness, has the same meaning in his ear, the same power over his soul, as the word "victory" has over the mind of the hero: and the preparation and delivery of the most eloquent sermons, with all the plaudits that follow them, will no more satisfy his ambition, than the skilful evolutions, the military splendour, and the martial music of a field-day, however they may be admired by the multitudinous spectators, will content the desires of the patriot warrior who burns to defeat his country's foe upon the field

of battle, and to rescue the liberties of his enslaved nation from the grasp of its tyrant. By the earnest minister, the salvation of souls is sought with the obligation of a principle, and the ardour of a passion. It is impressed upon his whole character, and is inseparable from his conduct. It distinguishes him among, and from, many of his brethren. When congregations either at home or abroad go to hear him, they know what to expect, and consequently do not look for the flowers of rhetoric, but for the fruit of the tree of life; not for a dry crust of philosophy, or a petrifaction of criticism, but for the bread which comes down from heaven; not for a display of religious fireworks, splendid but useless, but for the holding up of the torch of eternal truth in all its brightness to guide wandering and benighted souls to the refuge of the lost. He has by the usual style of his pulpit discourses established his character as a useful preacher, and those who go to hear him would as soon expect to hear from a physician whom they consulted when sick, a mere poetical effusion or classical dissertation, instead of directions for their health, as to hear such matters from this servant of Christ, instead of a sermon calculated and designed to do good to their souls. He could possibly be eloquent, profound, or learned; and when such qualities can aid him in securing his one great end, he does not scruple to use them. His aim is at the heart and conscience, and if any thing poetic, literary, logical, or scientific, will at any time polish and plume his shafts or sharpen the points of his arrows, he will not reject them, but will avail himself of their legitimate use, that he may the more certainly hit and pierce the mark. This is his motto, "If by any means I might save some."

III. But this touches a third thing implied in genuine earnestness, and that is the studious invention and diligent use of all appropriate means to accomplish the selected object. An earnest man is the last to be satisfied with mere formality, routine, and prescription. He will often survey his object, his means, and his instruments: will look back upon the past to review his course, to examine his failure and success, with the causes of each; to learn what to do, and what to avoid, for the future. His inquiries will often be, What next? What more? What better? And as the result of all this, new experiments will be tried, new plans will be laid, and new courses will be pursued. With an inextinguishable ardour, and with a resolute fixedness of purpose, he exclaims, "I must succeed. And how is it to be?"

And shall we ministers possess nothing of this earnestness, if we are seeking the salvation of souls? Shall dull uniformity, still formality, wearisome repetitions, and rigid routine, satisfy us? Shall we never institute the inquiry, "Why have I not succeeded better in my ministry? How is it that my congregation is not larger, and my church more rapidly increasing? In what way can I account for it that the truth as it is in Jesus, which I believe I preach, is not more influential, and the doctrine of the cross is not, as it was intended to be, the power of God unto the salvation of souls? Why do I not more frequently hear addressed to me, by those who are constantly under my ministry, the anxious inquiry, 'What shall I do to be saved?' I am not wanting, as far as I know, in the regular discharge of my ordinary duties, and yet I gather little fruit of my labours, and have to utter continually the

prophet's complaint, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'" Do we indeed indulge in such complaints! Have we earnestness enough to pour forth such lamentations? Or is it of little consequence to us, whether the ends of the ministry are accomplished or not, provided we get our stipends, keep up our congregations to their usual size, and maintain tranquillity in our churches? Are we often seen by God's omniscient eye pacing our studies in deep thoughtfulness, solemn meditation, and rigorous self-inquisition; and after an impartial survey of our doings, and a sorrowful lamentation that we are doing no more, questioning ourselves thus? "Is there no new method to be tried, no new scheme to be devised, to increase the efficiency of my ministerial and pastoral labours? Is there nothing I can improve, correct, or add? Is there any thing particularly wanting in the matter, manner, or method of my preaching, or in my course of pastoral attention?" Surely it might be supposed that such inquiries would be often instituted into the results of a ministry so momentous as ours; that seasons would be not unfrequently set apart, especially at the close or beginning of every year, for such a purpose. The result could not fail to be beneficial.

Here it may be proper for us to look out of our own profession, and ask if the earnest tradesman, soldier, lawyer, philosopher, and mechanician, are satisfied to go on as they have done, though with ever so little success? Do we not see in all other departments of human action, where the mind is really intent on some great object, and where success has not been obtained in proportion to the labour bestowed, a dissatisfaction with past modes of action, and a determination to try

new ones? And should we who watch for souls, and labour for immortality, be indifferent to success, and to the plans by which it might be secured? In calling for new methods, I want no new doctrines; no new principles; no startling eccentricities; no wild irregularities; no vagaries of enthusiasm, no phrensies of the passions; no, nothing but what the most sober judgment and the soundest reason would approve; but I do want a more inventive, as well as a more fervid, zeal in seeking the great end of our ministry. Respectable but dull uniformity, and not enthusiasm, is the side on which our danger lies. I know very well the contortions of an epileptic zeal are to be avoided, but so also is the numbness of a paralytic one; and after all, the former is less dangerous to life, and is more easily and frequently cured, than the latter. We may, as regards our preaching for instance, examine whether we have not dwelt too little on the alarming, or on the attractive, themes of revelation: whether we have not clothed our discourses too much with the terrors of the Lord: and if so, we may wisely determine to try the more winning forms of love and mercy: or whether we have not rendered the gospel powerless by a perpetual repetition of it in common-place phraseology: whether we have not been too argumentative, and resolve to be more imaginative, practical, and hortatory: whether we have not addressed ourselves too exclusively to believers, and determine to commence a style of more frequent and pungent address to the unconverted: whether we have not been too vague and general in our descriptions of sin, and become more specific and discriminating: whether we have not been too neglectful of the young, and begin a regular course of sermons to

them: whether we have not had too much sameness of topic, and adopt courses of sermons on given subjects: whether we have not been too elaborate and abstract in the composition of our discourses, and come down to greater simplicity: whether we have not been too careless, and bestow more pains: whether we have not been too doctrinal, and in future make all truth bear, as it was intended to do, upon the heart, conscience, and life.

Nor must the enquiry stop here. There ought to be the same process of rigid scrutiny instituted as to the labours of the pastorate. We must review the proceedings of this momentous department, for here also is most ample scope for invention as to new plans of action. Perhaps upon inquiry we shall find out that we have neglected various channels through which our influence might have been brought to bear upon the flock committed to our care, and shall discover many ways in which we can improve upon our former plans, in the way of meeting inquirers after salvation, giving our aid to Sunday schools, setting up Bible classes, or visiting the flock. What is needed is an anxious wish to be wanting in nothing that can conduce to our usefulness, a diligent endeavour to make up every deficiency, and a mind ever inquisitive after new means and methods of doing good. Did we but adopt the plan of setting apart a day at the close of every year for solemn examination into our ministerial and pastoral doings, with the view of ascertaining our defects and neglects, to see in what way we could improve, to humble ourselves before God for the past, and to lay down new rules for the future, we should all be more

abundantly useful than we are. And does not earnestness require all this? Can we pretend to be in earnest if we neglect these things? The idea of a minister's going on from year to year with either little success, or none at all, and yet never pausing to inquire how this comes to pass, or what can be done to increase his efficieney, is so utterly repugnant to all proper notions of devotedness, that we are obliged to conclude, the views such a man entertains of the design and end of his office are radically and essentially defective.

IV. Earnestness implies a purpose and power of subordinating every thing it meets with, selects, or engages in, to the accomplishment of its one great object.

An earnest man has much sagacity in discerning even at a distance, the objects which are favourable to his purpose; much power in seizing them as they approach; and much tact in pressing them into his service, and making them subserve his schemes. He avoids at the same time the folly of letting go his main object in pursuit of inferior ones: and of converting what ought to be only means into ends. The operations of his mind resemble those of a vast machine, in which the ruling power subjects to itself the thousand little wheels and spindles that are set in motion, and makes them all accomplish the purpose for which the engine has been set up. Or the current of his thought and feeling may be compared to the majestic flow of some noble river, which receives into its stream, numerous rivulets by which its waters are swollen, and its power increased. So acts the earnest minister. There are various matters which he may attend to, and

ought not to neglect, which may with great propriety be considered as means, but which cannot be viewed as the end of his high and holy calling.

The first of these which I mention is learning, and indeed general knowledge of all kinds. Literature, science, and philosophy, however excellent in themselves, and however subservient they may be rendered as means to accomplish the great ends of the ministerial office, must never be exalted into the place of those ends themselves. Viewed as subordinate and subsidiary, they cannot be too highly valued, or too diligently sought. There is not any kind or degree of knowledge which may not be made tributary to the ends of gospel ministrations. All other things being equal, he is likely to be the most useful preacher, who is the most learned one. There is nothing, there can be nothing, in literature and science, which of itself can be injurious to a minister of Christ: the pride and vanity which produce such a result are but the weeds which flourish in a shallow and sandy soil, but wither and die in a rich deep loam. The man who decries learning as in itself mischievous to the ministry, is fit only to be torch-bearer to another Caliph Omar, and to act the part of an incendiary to all the libraries of the world. A minister may have too little piety, too little solicitude for the salvation of souls, too little devotedness, too little care to render his acquisitions subservient to the ends of his vocation, but he can never have too much knowledge.

How beautiful is the following language of Dr. Wiseman, and how correct the sentiment which it clothes and adorns.

"Perhaps the best answer that can be given to those inconsiderate Christians who say that religion needs not such foreign and meretricious aids as human learning, is that of South, 'If God hath no need of our learning, he can have still less of your ignorance.' In the spiritual temple, as well as in the ark of the covenant, there is room not only for those humbler gifts, the skins and hair cloth, but also for the gold and silver of human learning: and even the sciences themselves, daughters as they are of the uncreated wisdom, may receive consecration from seraphic piety, and be made priestesses of the Most High, by the very service in which we employ them."

"You all, I doubt not have often admired those exquisite paintings in the ceilings in the Borgia apartments of the Vatican, wherein the sciences are represented as holding their separate courts; each enthroned upon a stately chair, with features and mien of the most noble and dignified beauty, surrounded by the emblems and most distinguished representatives of its power on earth, and seeming to claim homage from all that gaze upon it. And judge what would have been the painter's conception, and to what a sublimity of expression he would have risen, had it been his task to represent the noblest of all sciences, our divine religion, enthroned as ever becomes her to receive the fealty and worship of these her handmaids. For if, as hath been proved, they are but ministers to her superior rule, and are intended to furnish the evidences of her authority, how much above theirs must be the comeliness, and grace, and majesty, and holiness, with which she must be arrayed! And what honour and dignity must be conferred on him who feels himself deputed to bear the tribute of these fair vassals; and how must his admiration of their graces be enhanced, by finding himself brought so near her presence." *

This splendid passage expresses what I would urgently enforce, that literature and science may be subservient, but must be only subservient to the ends of the ministerial office.

Having thus quoted a passage from a Roman Catholic author, let me subjoin to it another from a Protestant, of a different kind indeed, but by no

* "Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revealed Religion." Vol. 2, p. 317.

means inharmonious with it. The amiable and pious Doddridge, in his incomparable sermon on "The Evil and Danger of Neglecting Souls," says,

"Oh my brethren, let us consider how fast we are posting through this dying life, which God has assigned to us, in which we are to manage concerns of infinite moment: how fast we are passing on to the immediate presence of our Lord, to give up our account to him. You must judge for yourselves, but permit me to say for my own part, I would not for ten thousand worlds be that man, who when God shall ask him at last how he has employed most of his time, while he continued a minister of his church and had the care of souls, shall be obliged to reply, 'Lord, I have restored many corrupted passages in the classics, and illustrated many which were before obscure; I have cleared up many intricacies in chronology or geography; I have solved many perplexed cases in algebra; I have refined on astronomical calculations, and left behind me many sheets on these curious and difficult subjects; and these are the employments in which my life has been worn out, while preparations for the pulpit, and ministrations in it, did not demand my more immediate attendance.' Oh Sirs, as for the waters that are drawn from these springs, how sweetly soever they may taste to a curious mind that thirsts after them, or to an ambitious mind that thirsts for the applause they sometimes procure, I fear there is too often reason to pour them out before the Lord, with rivers of penitential tears, as the blood of souls which have been forgotten, whilst these trifles have been remembered and pursued."

This is the language of a scholar, a critic, and a man of varied knowledge, whose piety as a Christian, and whose devotedness as a minister, were equal to his other attainments.

In a very elaborate and able critique on Hagenbach's "History of Doctrines," contained in the Eclectic Review, for September, I find the following just and admirable remarks.

"We trust that among the rising ministry no one will allow himself to be tempted to the task for the mere reputation of learning. The real value of learning, in the estimate of a faithful servant of Christ, lies solely in the use that can be made of it. He who employs

time and toil in rendering himself a learned man, which employed otherwise, would more effectually render him a useful man, is unfaithful to his Master. There are few things more important than the right appreciation of learning. There are some who spend their whole lives in acquiring it, in amassing hoard upon hoard; as if it were the object of life to try how much may be got in a given time; not how much good may be done with it, or to what uses it may be turned as it is acquired. It is get, get, get; all getting and no giving. This is of a piece with the mania by which some are possessed in the mercantile world, the mania of money-making: with whom life's problem is, how they may die rich, how much they can be worth in the world, before the moment comes when they must leave it. There is one material difference between the two cases; and, strange to say it is in favour of the rich rather than of the learned man. The rich man leaves his amassed treasures behind him; so that, although to himself they have been of little use while he lived, and now are of none, they are not lost; others may use them, and use them well. But he who has been acquiring learning all his days without expending it in its appropriate uses, leaves nothing behind him. He carries all with him. There is no bank for deposits of learning, as there is for lodging silver and gold. So far as his fellow-men are concerned, therefore, the money-hoarding miser does most good. And should it be thought an advantage on the side of the miser in learning, that he carries his mental stores away with him, as being treasures that belong to the immortal mind, there are two serious deductions to be made from this advantage: the first that the large proportion of what he had acquired, is of a nature to be of little use to him, in all likelihood, in the world to which he is going; and the second, that in common with the man of wealth, he carries with him to that world, the guilt, (unthought of by him here, it may be, but noted in his account with his Divine Master,) of not having laid out his acquisitions for the good he might have accomplished by them, where and when alone they could be available. Let it not be forgotten that mere learning is not wisdom; that wisdom is learning or knowledge in union with the disposition and ability to make a right use of it. Neither let it be forgotten that there is an opposite extreme to that which has just been described. If there are some who are ever getting and never giving, there are some too who would fain be ever giving while they are never getting. They are fond of preaching, but not of reading and study. Such young ministers may be well-meaning; but they are under the in-

fluence of a miserable mistake. Itinerants they may be, and useful ones: but efficient pastors they can never be. They may preach the simple elements of the gospel, from place to place; but for the constant regular instruction of the same flock they are utterly unfit. He must be an extraordinary man who has resources in himself for such a work, that render him independent of reading and study. Barrenness, tameness, sameness, triteness, irksome and unprofitable repetition, must be the almost invariable result of such presumption. There are some too, who, by way of honouring the Bible, make it their rule to study nothing else, not even such human helps as may fit them for understanding and illustrating its contents. This also, though a better extreme than his, who neglecting the Bible itself, studies only human opinions about it, yet is still an extreme, and an extreme which, while it professes to put honour upon the Bible, indicates no small measure of self-sufficiency. We put most honour upon the Bible, when we manifest our impression of the value of a full and clear comprehension of its contents, in the diligent application of all accessible means for the attainment of it." *

It may be conceded, that we live in an age when to carry out the main purpose of the christian ministry, and to render it efficient for the salvation of souls, higher ministerial qualifications, and larger acquirements of general knowledge are required, than at any former period.

It will be clearly seen from all this, that I am not decrying education, or learning, or the greatest diligence in ministers for the acquisition of knowledge. Quite the contrary: but I am enforcing, with all the earnestness I can command, the indispensable necessity

* The whole critique, of which this is a quotation, is of inestimable value, and makes one rejoice that we have periodicals, and able writers in them, to use this writer's own remark, "too old-fashioned and puritanical to endure" much of what is now coming from even the orthodox German school of theology; periodicals and writers, that will continue, it is ardently hoped, to use their critical and evangelical sieve to winnow the works now being, in such numbers, translated from German into English, which though they have much wheat, have also some chaff.

of rendering all acquirements subordinate to the great work of saving souls. Learning as an ultimate object and for its own sake, is infinitely below the ambition of a holy and devoted servant of Christ; but learning employed to invigorate the intellect, to enrich the imagination, to cultivate the taste, to give power to thought, and variety to illustration; to add to the skill and energy with which we wield the weapons of our warfare, is in some cases indispensable, and in all invaluable. Unhappily it is not uncommon for those who have made acquisitions in varied learning, or acquired a scientific, philosophic, or literary taste, to yield to the seductions of these pursuits, and to allow themselves to be led astray from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. Their eye is not single, and their whole body is not full of light. If there is one man to be admired, envied, and imitated above all others, it is he who has baptized all his classic and scientific acquirements at the font of Christianity, has presented them at the foot of the cross, and has used them only as the instruments and materials of that divine art by which he is enabled to give a richer colouring, stronger light, and greater power to those facts and scenes, of which the cross is the centre and the symbol. To hear such a man chastening and guiding, but not checking or freezing, the gushing utterances of a full heart, by the standard of genuine eloquence; and warming and sanctifying the finest rhetoric by the glow of a soul on fire with love to God and souls; to see the genius of Tully or Demosthenes, embuing itself with the spirit of Paul, Peter, or John, and under the constraining love of Christ, employing all its resources of diction, dialectics, and metaphor, to persuade men to be reconciled to God, teaches the earnestness

which the pulpit deserves and demands. Such a minister is a polished shaft in Jehovah's quiver, and to such a preacher we can almost fancy that not only men but angels must listen with delight. Such preachers we have had, and by the divine blessing may have again: only let us use the means, and look to have our tongues touched with the live coal from the divine altar.

There is, however, too much truth in the following remarks of Dr. Vaughan.

"The effect of learning and elegant scholarship, in the modern pulpit, has commonly been to render men incapable of producing impression of this nature in any degree. In the case of such preachers, neither the diction they use, nor the mould into which they cast their expressions and sentences, nor the comparisons they introduce, nor anything belonging to their rhetoric, has been an object of study with a view to its fitness to secure attention, and to move the thoughts and passions of such assemblies as are generally convened by the preacher, assemblies made up from the popular, much more than from the thoroughly educated, classes of society. The great object of this class of preachers has been to acquit themselves learnedly, or to acquit themselves elegantly. It is grievous to witness the mischiefs which have resulted from this conventionalism in pulpit taste. If our pulpit lessons must be veiled in the language of a particular kind of scholarship, then the people generally, and even men of good natural parts, who have not been initiated into that scholarship, will fail to perceive our meaning, and will begin as the consequence, to cast about for some better employment than listening to the utterance of our unknown tongue."*

I go on now to mention another qualification for the sacred office, which the earnest minister will anxiously cultivate with a view to the great object of his life and labours, and to this I advance with a praying mind, an anxious heart and a trembling hand, ardently desirous to set it forth in such manner as shall secure for it the attention which its importance demands; I mean per-

* Modern Pulpit, pp. 23, 24.

sonal religion. We are weak in the pulpit, because we are weak in the closet. An earnest man will not only train his mind to understand his object, and draw around him the resources requisite for its accomplishment, but will discipline his heart: for there, within, is the spring of energy, the seat of impulse, and the source of power. There the life that quickens must reside, and thence it must be felt to emanate. If the heart beat feebly, the whole circulation must be sluggish, and the frame inert. So it is with us ministers: our own personal religion is the mainspring of all our power in the pulpit. We are feeble as preachers, because we are feeble as Christians. Whatever other deficiencies we have, the chief of them all lies in our hearts. The apostle said, "We believe and therefore speak." We not only speak what we believe, but as we believe: if our faith be weak, so will be our utterance. In another place the same inspired writer said, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." It was as standing amidst the solemnities of the last judgment, that apostles besought men to be reconciled to God. The flame of zeal which in their ministrations rose to such a height and intensity as to subject them to the charge of insanity, is thus accounted for, "The love of Christ constraineth us." We have too much forgotten that the fount of eloquence is in the heart; and that it is feeling which gives to words and thoughts their power. An unrenewed man, or one of lukewarm piety, may preach elaborate sermons upon orthodox doctrines, but what are they for power and efficiency when compared with even the inferior compositions of the preacher who feels as well as glories in the cross, but as the

powerless gleams of the aurora borealis to the warm and vivifying rays of the sun?

The Christian minister sustains a double relation, and has a double duty to perform; he is a preacher to the world, and a pastor to the church; and it is impossible he can fulfil, or be in earnest to fulfil, the obligations he is under to either, without a large measure of personal godliness. As regards the church which is committed to his care, and of which he is made by the Holy Ghost the spiritual overseer, he has to increase not their knowledge only, but also their holiness, love, and spirituality; to aid them in performing all the branches of duty, and in cultivating all the graces of sanctification. And what is the present spiritual condition of the great bulk of the professors of religion? Amidst much that is cheering, there is on the other hand much that is discouraging and distressing to the pious observer. We behold a strange combination of zeal and worldly-mindedness; great activity for the extension of religion in the earth, united with lamentable indifference to the state of religion in a man's own soul; apparent vigour in the extremities, with a growing torpor at the heart. Multitudes are substituting zeal for piety, liberality for self-mortification, and a merely social for a personal religion. No careful reader of the New Testament, and careful observer of the present state of the church, can fail to be convinced, one should think, that what is now wanting is a higher tone of spirituality. The Christian profession is sinking in respect of personal piety; the line of separation between the church and the world becomes less and less perceptible: and this is taking place, less through the elevation of the world, than through the depression of the church. The cha-

racter of genuine Christianity, as expounded from pulpits, and delineated in books, has too rarely a counterpart in the lives and spirit of its professors.

How is this to be remedied, and by what means is the spirit of piety to be revived? May we not ask a previous question, How came the spirit of slumber over the church? Was it not from the pulpit? And if a revival is to take place in the former, must it not begin in the latter? Are the ministers of the present day possessed of that earnest piety which is likely to originate and sustain an earnest style of preaching, and to revive the lukewarmness of their flocks? I do not mean for a moment to insinuate that the ministers of the present day among the Dissenters, or Methodists, or the Evangelical clergy of the Church of England, are characterised by immorality, or even by a want of substantial holiness; or that they would suffer, as regards their piety, in comparison with those of some other periods in the history of their denominations: but what I am compelled to believe, and what I now express is, that our deficiencies are great, when we are compared not only with what ministers have ever been required to be, but especially with what we are required to be by the circumstances of the times in which we live. Amidst the eager pursuit of commerce, the elegance and soft indulgence of an age of growing refinement, the high cultivation of intellect, and the contests of politics, the church needs a strong and high barrier to keep out the encroachment of tides so adverse to its prosperity, and to keep in and to raise higher its spiritual life. And where shall it find this, if not in the pulpit? It is not to be expected in the nature of things that the church will in spirituality ever be superior to

the ministry; or will ever consider itself without excuse for its inferiority. It will not tread a path which its spiritual guides are slow to pursue; and will deem it an affectation of sanctity and presumptuous ambition to attempt to advance beyond them. How else than by admitting a deficiency of our piety can we account for the fact of a diminished efficiency in our ministry?

I cannot resist the temptation of giving here a long extract from a beautiful tract entitled "A Revived Ministry our only Hope for a Revived Church;" a tract so eminently excellent, and so adapted to promote the end of the pious and accomplished writer, that the fact of such a heart-searching, soul-reviving production having as yet reached only a second edition, is a proof that we have little wish to be raised to higher attainments in piety.

"And for such a revived ministry there would be the most hopeful preparation of mind. The object to be aimed at would be distinctly conceived; it would be loved and cherished as the noblest to which a redeemed being can consecrate himself; and there would be a readiness to yield everything to the urgency and grandeur of its claims, together with a simplicity and guilelessness of intention, which would mightily aid the judgment in seeing its best way to the best methods of achieving it. In such circumstances, all the distracting influences arising from indistinct views, a divided heart, and infirmity of purpose, would be withdrawn, and leave the minister of Christ free to take a decided and energetic course. The subjection of the church and the world to the dominion of the truth, in a pure heart and holy life, would be ever present to his mind as the sole and sublime end of his ministry: and drawing after it the full tide of his sympathies, and permitting no diversion of his strength to any inferior object, it would command all his powers, and dispossess him of every wish but that of living and dying for it. And that moment would be the dawn of an era of prosperity.

"Everything which he did would be enlivened by the presence of a warmer and holier zeal; but it would be the public administration of divine truth, in the ordinance of preaching, in which the stronger

and healthier pulsations of spiritual life would be most signally displayed, and from which the largest results might be expected. In this he would be prepared for acting a new part. Himself saved, and eminently sanctified, as well as possessed of the whole treasury of sacred knowledge in the inspired volume, he would be well versed in the respective truths best calculated for awakening the unconverted, and promoting the highest sanctification of the church, and administer them with improved wisdom and force. The wretchedness of the soul as guilty, depraved, and hastening to the judgment-seat; the blessedness of arresting it in its downward course, and of exalting it once more to the glory of the Divine image and favour; the ample means provided for all this in the mediation of Christ; the experience of the efficacy in himself, and the conviction of their undiminished power to do as much for others; the rapid flight of time, and the possibility of all the mercy overshadowing that hour being trifled with and lost for ever, these thrill his soul with mingled commiseration, hope, and fear, and urge him to improve to the utmost the fleeting opportunity of snatching sinners from perdition, and adding to the brightness of the Redeemer's crown. How well chosen is his theme, no matter of curious speculation, but some one or more of the solemn verities which concern the instant faith and obedience of every hearer, and bring life or death, as accepted or rejected! Away with those artificial rules which some have prescribed, as if to prepare a sermon were something like composing an epic! He has a truth to enforce, a moral effect to produce, and the sense of its unutterable importance brings to bear upon it all the resources of a judicious, intelligent, and impassioned mind. Bent on winning souls to God, or quickening them to higher obedience, this one desire possesses and inflames him, and gives a unity and completeness to his subject, a force and compactness of argument, a felicity of speech and manner, an ardour and impressiveness of appeal, which the art of the rhetorician could never have supplied. He feels moreover, that his strength is in God, and that the pleadings of human wisdom and pity never availed apart from a higher inspiration. Would there not be more than hope from a ministry like this? In itself so convincing and persuasive, rendered still more so by the practical exhibition of all the faith, uprightness, benevolence, and spirituality which it inculcates, looking to God, and owning its weakness without his blessing, it would have all the characteristics from which the susceptibilities of the human mind, and the solemn promises of the Almighty, authorise the expectation of enlarged success. When was

such a ministry known to be long in contact with the minds of men, without producing the happiest effects? 'The word of the Lord would have free course and be glorified,' converts press into the church, and the church be raised to a higher renovation.

"And the minister thus revived would have unwonted power in individual intercourse with the members of his flock. Living only for their advancement in faith and holiness, the warmth and tenderness of his concern for it would make him prompt to seize every opportunity of promoting it, and give an appropriateness and weight to his sayings, which a colder and less earnest piety would never have dictated: while the objects of his solicitude, feeling the point and force of his words, and impressed with his singleness of purpose, and still more with that uniform display of the Christian virtues, which was the best voucher of his deep sincerity, would find themselves drawn along by a combination of influences so pure and commanding, that they must tread in the steps of his piety, and bend to his hallowed purpose of extending the limits of the church, and giving it a holier aspect. Every faithful minister can look back upon seasons when under the kindlings of a warmer love and zeal, and a more affecting sense of eternal things, he was animated to increased exertion; and he has found that not only did his preaching fix the attention and touch the souls of his hearers more than at other times, but that, when he went among them in private, the elevation of his spirit, the seriousness of his converse, and the solemnity and unction pervading his petitions, produced an evident impression, and that he left them with improved feelings and resolves. All emotion is contagious, and easily propagates itself to other bosoms; but, besides this, the wakefulness of his zeal, and his steadiness of purpose, made him eager to extract the highest amount of good from every opportunity, stimulated ingenuity, and gave an aptness and charm to all that he said, which fell with happy effect on the understanding and the heart. And had the ardour and determination of those seasons been permanent, the equable and healthy excitement of every day's labour, instead of soon relapsing into the feebler sensibility of other times, his ministry would doubtless have told a different history, and be far more richly laden with precious fruit."

Happy shall I feel if this feeble tribute, not only of the recommendation of my pen, but of my heart's gratitude for the benefit I have derived from this production, shall induce any of my brethren to peruse this

precious gift, which has been offered to them by a writer who veils himself under the modest title of "One of the least among the Brethren."

Do we want examples and patterns of eminent and earnest piety, how richly are they supplied both in number and in quality in the pages of our own denominational history! Where is the deep, ardent, experimental religion of our ancestors, the fathers and founders of Protestant nonconformity? What a theologian was Owen, when he wrote his "Exposition of the Hebrews;" what a polemic when he penned his "Controversy" with Biddle; what an ecclesiastic when he drew up his "Treatise on Church Government;" but what a Christian when he indulged in his "Meditations on the Glory of Christ," and gave us his treatise "On Spirituality of Mind and the Mortification of Sin." What a logician and divine was Howe, when he produced his "Living Temple;" but what a Christian, when in the shadow of this noble structure of his holy genius, he poured out his heart in his work on "Delighting in God," and the "Blessedness of the Righteous." And then think of holy Baxter, who gained repose from the labours of polemic strife, and relief from the tortures of the stone, in the believing anticipations of "The Saint's Rest." Was their piety the result of their sufferings? Then for one I could be almost content to take the latter, so that I might be possessed of the former. Lead me to the spots, I do not say where they trimmed their midnight lamp, and continued at their studies till the morning star glittering through their casement chided them to their pillow; but to those more hallowed scenes, where they held their nightly vigils, and wrestled with the angel till the break of day. Mighty shades of Owen

and Baxter, Howe and Manton, Henry and Bates, Goodwin and Nye, illustrious and holy men, we thank you for the rich legacy you have bequeathed to us in your immortal works: but O where has the mantle of your piety fallen? "God of our fathers! be the God of their succeeding race."

Here then let us begin, where indeed we ought to begin, with our own spirits; for what should be the piety of that man on the state of whose heart depends in no small degree the spiritual condition of a whole Christian community? If we turn to any department of human action we shall learn that no one can inspire a taste, much less a passion, for the object of his own pursuit, who is not himself most powerfully moved by it. It is a scintillation of his zeal flying off from his own glowing heart, and falling upon their souls, which kindles in them the fire which burns in himself. Lukewarmness can excite no ardour, originate no activity, produce no effect: it benumbs whatever it touches. If we enquire what were the sources of the energy, and the springs of the activity, of the most successful ministers of Christ, we shall find that they lay in the ardour of their devotion. They were men of prayer and of faith. They dwelt upon the mount of communion with God, and came down from it like Moses to the people, radiant with the glory on which they had themselves been intently gazing. They stationed themselves where they could look at things unseen and eternal, and came with the stupendous visions fresh in their view, and preached under the impression of what they had just seen and heard. They drew their thoughts and made their sermons from their minds and from their books, but they breathed life and power into them from their

hearts, and in their closets. Trace either Whitfield or Wesley in their career, and you will see how beaten was the road between their pulpits and their closets: the grass was not allowed to grow in that path. This was in great part the secret of their power. They were mighty in public, because in their retirement they had clothed themselves, so to speak, with Omnipotence. They reflected the lustre they had caught in the Divine presence; and its attraction was irresistible. The same might be said of all others who have attained to eminence as successful preachers of the gospel. If then we would see a revival of the power of the pulpit, we must first of all see a revival in the piety of those who occupy it: and when this is the case, then, "he that is feeble among us shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

CHAPTER III.

THE NATURE OF EARNESTNESS (CONTINUED).

V. Earnestness will manifest itself by energetic and untiring action in use of those means by which its object is accomplished. It does not satisfy itself with contemplation, however enraptured; schemes, however well concerted; wishes, however fervent; or anticipations, however lively; but proceeds to vigorous, well arranged, and well adapted exertion. An earnest man must of necessity be an active one: he is the opposite and the contrast of an idle dreamer. "I see my object," he exclaims; "it stands out in bold relief, clearly defined before my eyes, and I will leave no effort untried to accomplish it. I have made up my mind to labour, self-denial, and fatigue; and if I do not succeed, it shall not be for want of determined and continuous effort." Such is his resolution, and his practice fulfils it. He is always at work. You know where to find him, and how he will be employed. He is the very type of diligence. Labour is pleasure. No difficulties deter him, no disappointments dishearten him. The ignorant do not understand him, the indolent pity him, but the intelligent admire him. There is something in his earnestness commanding, attractive, and inspiring, especially when the object of it is worthy.

Apply this to the ministry; there are two means by which this accomplishes its end, preaching and the pastorate.

In reference to the former, I advert first to the matter of our ministrations. And this must consist of course of those topics which bear most obviously and directly upon the great ends we are seeking to accomplish. Earnestness will take the nearest and most direct road to its object; nor will it be seduced from its path by beautiful prospects and pleasant walks, that lie in another direction. "I want to reach that point, and I cannot allow myself to be attracted by scenes, which however agreeable and interesting to others, would, if I stayed or turned to contemplate them, only hinder me in my business." Such is the language of one intent upon success in any particular scheme. Now what is the end of our office? The reconciliation of sinners to God, and their ultimate and complete salvation, when so reconciled. It is easy then to see that the matter of our instruction and persuasion must be the ministry of reconciliation. Of course it must be our purpose to declare the whole counsel of God, and to remember "that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In the way of exposition, a minister should go through the greater part of the whole Bible, fairly and honestly explaining and enforcing it. But since the whole Bible, as explained by the more perfect revelation of the New Testament, directly or indirectly points to Christ, or may be illustrated and enjoined by considerations suggested by his mission and work, our preaching should

have a decidedly evangelical character. The divinity, incarnation, and death of Christ; his atonement for sin; his resurrection, ascension, intercession, and mediatorial reign; his spiritual kingdom, and his second coming; the offices and work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating, regenerating, and sanctifying the human soul; the doctrine of justification by faith, and the new birth; the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of his saving gifts; these and their kindred and collateral topics should form the staple of our ministrations and teaching. It surely must be this which the apostle meant when he said, "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." If there be any meaning in language, this must imply that the apostle in his ministry dwelt chiefly upon the work of Christ. His epistles all sustain this view of his meaning. They are all full of this great subject. We may perhaps smile at the simple piety of the individual who was at the trouble of counting the number of times that the apostle Paul mentions the name of Jesus in his epistles; but at the same time, something is to be learnt from the fact that he found it to reach between four and five hundred. This teaches us how thoroughly christian, how entirely imbued with evangelism, his mind and his writings were. His morality was as evangelical as his doctrine, for he enforced all the branches of social obligation by motives drawn from the cross. His ethics were all baptised with the spirit

of the gospel, so that the believer who has imbibed the spirit of his writings, will have his eye as constantly kept upon the crucified One, in the progress of his sanctification, as the sinner's eye is turned towards the same object, for his justification. This then was the earnestness of the apostle; one constant, uniform, and undeviating endeavour to save men's souls by the truth as it is in Jesus.

A question now arises whether it is the duty of modern preachers to adopt the same method, and whether, inasmuch as their ends are the same with those of the apostle, they are to seek them by the same means. One would suppose there can be no rational doubt of this. If the apostles were the inspired teachers of Christianity, and have given us in their writings a full exhibition of what Christianity really is; and if it is our business to explain and enforce their writings, it seems to follow, as a thing of course, that our teaching, as to the matter of our discourses, must resemble theirs: and will any one pretend that this resemblance can be established, unless our preaching is richly and prevailingly evangelical? I am aware it is sometimes said that times have altered since the apostles' days, that the state of the world is different from what it then was. But is not human nature in all its essential elements the same? Is it not the same in its moral aspect, impotency, and necessities? Does it not as much need, and as much depend upon, the gospel scheme now, as it did then? Is not the gospel as exquisitely and fully adapted to its miserable condition now as it was then? Can sin be pardoned in any other way than through the atonement of Christ; or the sinner be justified by any other means than faith in the Lord our Righteousness;

or the depraved heart be renewed and sanctified by any other agency than that of the Holy Spirit? Are not all the motives supplied by evangelical doctrine as powerful and as efficacious now, as they were then? No alteration of the subjects of preaching then can be called for now, to meet the advancing state of society, since the gospel is intended and adapted to be God's instrument for the salvation of man, in all ages of the world, in all countries, and in all states of society. The moral epidemic of our nature is always and every where the same, in whatever various degrees of virulence it may exist, and the remedial system of salvation by grace, through faith, is God's own and unalterable specific for the disease, in every age of time, in every country of the world, and in every state of society. Men may call in other physicians than Christ, and try other methods of cure, as they have done; but they will all fail, and leave the miserable patient hopeless and helpless, as regards any other means of health than that which the cross of Christ presents. I reject alike as delusive and fatal the ancient practice of conforming the evangelical scheme to systems of philosophy, and the modern Puseyite notion of the progressive developement of Christian doctrine by the church. To the men who would revive the former, I say, "Beware lest any man spoil you, through a vain and deceitful philosophy, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:" to the latter I say, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace:" It appears to me that something like the same attempts are being made

in this day to corrupt the gospel by superstitious additions on the one hand, and by philosophic accommodations on the other, as were made in the early days of Christianity. Our danger lies in the latter.

It should never be forgotten that the time when the apostles discharged their ministry was only just after the Augustan era of the ancient world. Poetry had recently bestowed on the lettered world the works of Virgil and Horace. The light of philosophy, though waning, still shed its lustre over Greece. The arts still exhibited their most splendid creations, though they had ceased to advance. It was at such a time, and amidst such scenes, the gospel began its course. The voices of the apostles were listened to by sages who had basked in the sunshine of Athenian wisdom, and were reverberated in startling echo from temples and statues that had been shaken by the thunders of Cicero and Demosthenes; yet they conceded nothing to the demands of philosophy, but held forth the cross as the only object they felt they had a right to exhibit. They never once entertained the degrading notion that they must accommodate themselves to the philosophy or the taste of the age in which they lived, and the places where they ministered. It is true the philosophy of that day was a false one, but it was not known or acknowledged to be such at the time. It was admired as true, though like many systems that have succeeded it, it gave place to another, and was doomed, like some that now prevail, to wane before new and rising lights. Whether the apostle addressed himself to the philosophers on Mars Hill, or to the barbarians on the island of Melita; whether he reasoned with the Jews in their synagogues, or with the Greeks in the school of Tyran-

nus, he had but one theme, and that was Christ, and him crucified. And what right, or what reason have we for deviating from this high and imperative example? Be it so, that we live in a literary, philosophic, and scientific age, what then? Is it an age that has outlived the need of the gospel for its salvation; or for the salvation of which any thing else can suffice but the gospel? The supposition that something else than pure Christianity, as the theme of our pulpit ministrations, is requisite for such a period as this, or that it must be presented in a philosophic guise, appears to me a most perilous sentiment, as being a disparagement to the gospel itself, a daring assumption of wisdom superior to God's, and containing the germ of infidelity. The gospel sustains the nature of a testimony which must be exhibited in its own peculiar and simple form; a testimony to certain unique and momentous facts which must be presented as they really are, without any attempt or wish to change their nature or alter their character, in order to bring them into nearer conformity to the systems of men. Let the taste be cultivated as it may by literature, or the mind be enlightened by science, or the reason be disciplined by philosophy, the heart is still deceitful and wicked, the conscience still burdened with guilt, and the whole soul in a state of alienation from God. The moral constitution is mortally diseased, and nothing but the gospel can convey God's saving health, which is as much required for his spiritual restoration by the polished son of science, as by the savage of New Zealand, or the Hottentot of South Africa. All else is but pretence and empiricism; and the man who would be successful in the salvation of souls must have a clear conviction and a deep impression

of these facts. Philosophy must never be allowed to dilute the elixir of life, nor to evaporate it into the clouds of metaphysics.

But perhaps the danger to which the evangelical ministry of the present age is exposed is not so much a philosophising spirit, or an attempt to make the gospel conform to any metaphysical theory, as an effort to attain to a high intellectuality in setting forth received truths. We hear a great deal about this in modern times. It is become a kind of cant term, (for there is high as well as low cant,) to speak of some men as very intellectual preachers. If by an intellectual preacher be meant a man who applies the acquirements of a well furnished and well trained understanding to explain and enforce the great topics of evangelical truth; or the application in the most attractive form to the great end of the Christian ministry, of whatever knowledge such a mind can obtain in its pursuit of all kinds of information; or the employment of sound logic and natural eloquence to make the doctrines which are unto salvation bear upon men's hearts and consciences, if this be meant, a man cannot be too intellectual, the great and glorious doctrines of revealed truth deserve and demand the mightiest energies of the noblest intellects: but if, as is too generally the case, intellectuality means the cold, dry, argumentative discussion of metaphysical subjects rather than of evangelical truths, or the discussion of such truths in an abstract and essay-like form; a mere heartless exercise of the reason of the preacher, intended and adapted only to engage the understanding of his hearers, without either interesting their affections or awakening their conscience; such intellectuality will do nothing but empty the places of worship in which it is

exhibited, or at best draw together a congregation of persons, who, though they cannot as yet bring themselves to do without some kind of religion, yet prefer the cold abstractions of the head to the warm affections of the heart. Such hearers assemble to listen to a metaphysical lecturer on spiritual subjects, and not to a publisher of glad tidings to sinners.

Here I would not be misconstrued to mean that every sermon must be on strictly evangelical themes; but that these must be the prevailing topics of the man who is in earnest for the salvation of souls. Nor would I go so far as to say that each sermon must contain as much of the gospel as would make every hearer of it acquainted with the way of salvation, even if he never should listen to another discourse. There is such a thing as treating these subjects so carelessly, so familiarly, and so frequently, as to deprive them of all their power to interest and impress. A man whose soul is possessed with the passion for doing good, will make almost any and every topic connected with the gospel tend to usefulness. Subjects, which in other hands would be dry and uninteresting, will in his be invested with the glow and warmth which live in his own soul, and which he imparts to every thing he touches. His heart beats with an action so strong, steady, and healthful, that his fervid and holy intelligence circulates an evangelical vitality through what in others would be a cold and torpid frame of mind, and thus causes the principle of gospel life to reach to the very extremities of the system of general truth. Still even he, though he dwell occasionally on every topic which can with propriety be brought into the pulpit, will like the apostle, "glory only in the cross of Christ." Resisting the

temptations to neglect the plain gospel, and to go in quest of airy speculations and unprofitable novelties, his aim will not be to gratify the imaginative by what is tasteful and poetic, the philosophical by what is profound, the metaphysical by what is subtle, or the curious by what is strange; but by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Alas, that any preacher of the gospel should take any other aim, and seek any other object, than this! Do we want subjects for eloquence, where can we find them in such abundance, grandeur, and sublimity, as in the gospel theme? The cross is a fount of the purest, most impassioned and most pathetic eloquence in the world, from which genius may be ever drawing, without fear of exhausting it. Compare the most finished orations and sermons of Massillon, Bossuet, or Bourdaloue, with McLaurin's discourse on "Glorying in the Cross;" and though they are more perfect as models of composition, and more decorated by the artifices and graces of rhetoric, yet how far below that incomparable sermon in the sublimity of its theme, and the grandeur of its evangelical eloquence, are those boasted masterpieces of the French pulpit! Even the soul of the polished but pointless Blair kindled into something like a glow of pious warmth when he came, which he did but rarely, within the attraction of this object; and though but as moonlight compared with the ardour of his colleague Walker, yet in his sermon on "The Death of Christ," his frigid elegance becomes enlivened by his theme, and furnishes a standing proof that the heathen morals of Epictetus are a barren source of eloquence, compared with the Christian doctrines of the apostle Paul. I make no apology here

for re-quoting a passage from an American author, which I have already given to the public in my "Address to Students."

"My dear brethren, why are we not more inpressive? Theology affords the best field for tender, solemn and sublime eloquence. The most august objects are presented; the most important interests are discussed; the most tender motives are urged. God and angels; the treason of Satan; the creation, ruin and recovery of a world; the incarnation, death, resurrection, and reign of the Son of God; the day of judgment; a burning universe; an eternity; a heaven and a hell; all pass before the eye. What are the petty dissensions of the states of Greece, or the ambition of Philip? What are the plots and victories of Rome, or the treason of Catiline, compared with this? If ministers were sufficiently qualified by education, study and the Holy Ghost; if they felt their subject as much as Demosthenes and Cicero did, they would be the most eloquent men on earth, and would be so esteemed wherever congenial minds were found." *

To know what themes have the greatest potency over the public mind, and should form the subject of an earnest ministry, we have only to consult the pages of ecclesiastical history. It is unnecessary to dwell again upon the matter of apostolic preaching. It was by the purest evangelism that Christianity was planted in the earth, and it was when this gave place to a religion of forms and ceremonies that the power and vitality of true godliness declined, and a mass of splendid corruption grew up, in the dark shadow of which the man of sin erected his throne, and the Papacy commenced its bloody reign. During the long night of the middle ages the sound of the faithful preacher was not heard, and the voice of Zion's watchman was silent, except in a few obscure nooks and corners of the earth; but wherever it was then heard, the same effects followed. It was this subject with which

* Dr. Griffin's Sermon on the Art of Preaching.

Claude of Turin, when nearly all the world was wandering after the beast, awakened in the ninth century the inhabitants of Piedmont, and commenced that glorious work which was more or less carried on for centuries, amid the seclusion of Alpine rocks and vallies; and which the concentrated power and fury of the Papacy could never entirely subvert. It was this evangelism which our Wickliff preached in England in the fifteenth century, and by it kindled a fire, amidst the smouldering ashes of which lay concealed embers which were again to ignite when fanned by the breath of other reformers, a century afterwards. By what means did Luther achieve his immortal trinmph over the powers of the Vatican, and strike off the fetters which had enslaved the judgment, heart, and conscience of man? By the potency of what theme did he lift up into freedom and dignity the prostrate intellect of the human race? What was the instrument with which he struck the empire of darkness, and inflicted a blow which resounded through Christendom? the great evangelical doctrine of justification by faith. By what means did Whitfield and Wesley rouse the slumbering piety of our nation, and call up a spirit which is going on from strength to strength to this day? By the evangelical system of Divine truth. What called forth the missionary enterprise, and constructed all that moral machinery which is at work to effect the world's conversion? Before what system of truths have the inhabitants of Polynesia and New Zealand surrendered their licentious habits and bloody rites; and the Hottentots and Esquimaux dropped their barbarism, and risen up in the form and manners of civilized men? What is the doctrine by which our

missionaries are taking possession of India and China? I answer in each case, the doctrine of the cross.

It is then a fact attested by authentic history, and uncontradicted by any one acquainted either with the present or the past, that all the great moral revolutions of our world, since the Christian era, have been effected by one simple process, by one set of means, and by one grand truth, and that process is preaching, those means are earnest men, and that truth is the gospel of the grace of God. Providential events may have prepared the way, by levelling mountains, and filling up vallies, and making smooth the course of the herald of the cross; but it is that herald's mighty voice proclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," which by the power of God's Spirit has changed the moral aspect of our dark and dreary world. This has not been done by learning, science, or philosophy, it is not the result of profound speculations on any theory of morals, or of fine processes of reasoning, or of splendid creations of poetic genius, or of the subtleties of metaphysical discussion: no, but of the simple testimony of the gospel. While the philosopher has been theorizing in his closet, and the statistical philanthropist has been carrying on his calculations in his study, the preacher has gone forth into the midst of the people, ignorant, wicked, and wretched, as they were, has lifted up the great truth of the loving God, the dying Saviour, and the regenerating Spirit, and has by these means, as an instrument of God, changed the aspect of society, and revolutionized the moral habits of nations.

Strange that with the knowledge of these facts, any of our preachers should think of replacing the glorious

truths which have wrought such wonders in the world, by any other themes; or should act as if weapons that have proved their adaptation and their power, should now be wielded with a doubtful mind and with a hesitating and wavering hand! If we would know how we are to convert souls to God, we have only to ask how has God converted them. Nor is it necessary to go back to past ages, or abroad to other countries. Let us only look round upon our own country; let us go to our largest congregations and our most numerous churches, and ask what kind of preaching has done all we see: what doctrine, and how handled, has drawn those multitudes together; what magnet has put forth its attractions there? The secret will be soon discovered, and it will be found that there is an exemplification of our Lord Jesus Christ's words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Go into other places where religious intellectuality is substituted for the vital truths of the gospel, where philosophical abstractions take the place of popular addresses on great fundamental doctrines, and cold, logical essays are read, instead of heart-stirring sermons being preached; and the attenuated and still declining congregations will proclaim the want of adaptation in the pulpit ministrations, and prove that for the popular mind there can be no substitute for the cross of Christ. Nor does this apply exclusively to the uneducated or partially educated classes. Human nature in all its prevailing features, tastes, necessities, and enjoyments, is the same in the king and in the peasant; in the savage and the sage. All men are susceptible of emotion, as well as capable of reasoning; and all men love to feel, as well as to think. A commercial or professional man, who

has been at work all the week, having had his mind strained with hard thinking, as well as his body by hard labour, when he takes his seat in his pew on a Sabbath morning, wants something for his heart, as well as for his head. With a sermon, however intellectual it may be, which has nothing that comes home to his affections, and causes him to feel, he is sure to be disappointed and dissatified. A dry essay on some gospel subject which only proves a point he never doubted, or starts a difficulty he never dreamt of, is like giving him a stone when he asks for bread. He wants to be made to feel and to realize that there is something higher and better than this world. He desires to enjoy the luxury of hallowed emotion, he covets the joy and peace of believing, and the anticipations of that world where the weary are at rest, and the din of business will be for ever hushed. That man, tired and jaded by the cares, anxieties, and toils of six days, wants to lie down and take repose on the soft green of evangelical truth, and not on the hard rocks of abstract speculation. It is true that being a man of education and reading, his heart must be reached through his intellect, and he must be fed with the substantial bread of evangelical truth, which, though his taste is healthful, must not be coarse and chaffy; must not only be made of the finest wheat, but it must also be well prepared, mixed and made by a skilful hand.

It is however said that though the same gospel is to be preached, and the matter of sermons is in substance to be ever the same, in all the varying states of society, yet that the mode of exhibiting it is to be accommodated to the circumstances of the age, and that a different mode of presenting the truth must be

adopted in an age of advancing knowledge, to what is pursued in one of less refined and cultivated habits. If by this be meant that there must be more vigorous thinking, more profound analysis, more accurate criticism, more varied illustration from the fields of science, more pains to show the harmony of sound theology with sound philosophy, then it may and must be admitted, that the mode of preaching should be adapted to the circumstances of an advancing age. But even with this admission, it must still be remembered that the essential nature of the gospel, as a testimony from God, to be received on the ground of its own evidence and authority, must not be altered; nor any attempts made to shift the obligation to receive it from this ground to its apparent reasonableness or conformity with the principles of any system of human philosophy. Nor must this adaptation to the circumstances of the age be carried so far either in the way of logic, criticism, or illustration, as to obscure the light, or corrupt the simplicity, of the evangelical system. The substitution of a dry, abstract, and philosophical mode of preaching the gospel, for a lively, forcible, and heart-affecting, conscience-rousing method, so far from being adapted to this age of excitement, is quite opposed to it. This is a busy, active, glowing period of time's history, as well as a thinking one. The heart is yearning, as well as the intellect. The abstractions of the intellect are dealt with now in such a manner as to kindle the affections to a blaze, and no method of exhibiting the gospel can be successful, if not adapted to produce this result. If flimsy thought, thread-bare common-places, will not do; so neither will mere airy speculation, hard logic, cold metaphysics, or mere philosophy. It must be the

gospel, preached with manly, vigorous thinking, in good Saxon words, and with classic simplicity and perspicuity of style. I am somewhat jealous about this idea of accommodating our method of preaching to the taste and circumstances of the age, till the meaning of the expression be accurately settled and thoroughly understood. Without great care, the spirit of accommodation and the attempt at adaptation will go on from manner to matter, and even our creeds will be somewhat curtailed and altered, to establish a harmony between our theology and our philosophy. Already the process has begun, and the neology of Germany, like a beacon gleaming upon us from its dreadful rock, should warn us of the danger we are in on such a coast, of making shipwreck of our faith. Perhaps the best mode of making this subject understood, and showing to what extent this adaptation may be carried, would be to select and compare the sermons of two different periods of the history of the pulpit. Take, then, for example, a sermon of Dr. Owen, or Dr. Manton, with all its numberless divisions and sub-divisions, quaint phraseology, and violations of taste, and put it by the side of a sermon by Dr. Chalmers, Mr Bradley, or Dr. Wardlaw; and by the comparison you will see that the power of adaptation has increased in the moderns, and that they exhibit the same glorious verities as their predecessors with improvements of style and arrangement.

Before I pass from this part of the subject, it may be proper to remark that perhaps there are few expressions more misunderstood, and with respect to which more mistakes have been made, than "preaching the gospel." Many by the use of this phrase aim to exclude

from the pulpit almost every topic but a perpetual and almost unvarying exhibition of the death of our Lord, and consider this, and this only, as specifically preaching Christ. But it is strangely forgotten by the preachers of this school, that as the scheme of mediation by the Saviour is founded on the eternal obligation and immutable nature of the law of God, and was intended not to subvert, but to uphold, its authority, the moral law must be explained and enforced in all its purity, spirituality, and extent. Repentance towards God is no less included in the apostolic ministry, than faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and a sinner cannot repent of his transgressions against the law, which he has violated, if he know it not: for "sin is the transgression of the law;" and "by the law is the knowledge of sin." No man can know sin without knowing the law: and herein appears to me one of the prevailing defects of modern preaching: I mean the neglect of holding up this perfect mirror, in which the sinner shall see reflected his own moral image. It is true that some are melted down at once into a sense of wickedness, and brought to the exercise of both repentance and faith, by an exhibition of divine love in the death of Christ; but this is not so usual a method of conversion as the first awakening of the sinner by an exposition and application of the perfect law. Dr Dwight says,

"Few, very few, are ever awakened or convinced by the encouragements and promises of the gospel; but almost all by the denunciation of the law. The blessings of immortality, the glories of heaven, are usually, to say the least, preached with little efficacy to an assembly of sinners. I have been surprised to see how dull, inattentive, and sleepy, such an assembly has been, amidst the strongest representations of these divine subjects, combining the most vivid images with a vigorous style and an impressive elocution." *

* Vol. II, p. 417.

This is a strong testimony, and it is perhaps a little overstated. Still I am persuaded there is much truth in it, for it seems to stand to reason, that men will care little about pardon, till they are convinced of sin; and as the apostle says, it is by the law that they come to the knowledge of sin. In this particular there appears to me a greater adaptation to the work of conviction in American preaching than in the British pulpit: it has more of this exposition of the law, and of the application of it to the sinner's conscience; more that is calculated to make him feel at once his obligations and his guilt; more of that which silences his excuses, unravels the deceitfulness of his heart, strips him of self-righteousness, makes him thoroughly acquainted with himself, and his intense need of a Saviour: in short, more of what the apostle calls commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; though it has, however, I think a want of evangelical fulness and tenderness. I remember a discussion by a large company of ministers in my vestry, on one occasion, as to the style of preaching which in their own experience they had found most useful; and it was pretty generally admitted, (and some of them had been among our most successful preachers,) that sermons on alarming and impressive texts had been most blessed in producing conviction of sin, and the first concern about salvation. At the same time it must be recollected that though descriptions of sin may affect, the exhibition of its consequences may affright, vehement censures of it may alarm, and reasoning concerning it may open the gloomy road to despair, these methods alone will not convert. Law without the gospel will harden, as the gospel without the law will only lead to

carelessness and presumption: it is the union of both that will possess the sinner with loathing of himself, and love to God. Still our danger in this age lies not so much in neglecting the gospel, as in omitting to associate with it the preaching of the law. It is worthy of remark, that Jesus Christ, who was incarnate love itself, the living gospel, yea the way, the truth, the life, was the most alarming preacher that was ever in our world. It is, however, incumbent upon us not to mistake grossness for fidelity; nor harshness for earnestness. The remarks of Mr. Hall on this, are as correct as they are beautiful:—

"A harsh and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the Word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficiency. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight upon our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips."

The look, the tone, the action, when such subjects are discussed, should be a mixture of solemnity and affection; the awfulness of love. To hear such topics dwelt upon in strong language, vehement action, and boisterous tones, strikes me as being an utter violation of all propriety, and is likely to excite horror and revulsion in every hearer of the least discernment. Real earnestness is the result of deep emotion, and the emotion excited by the sight of a fellow-creature perishing in his sins, is that of the tenderest commiseration, which will express itself not in stormy declamation and thundering denunciations, but in solemnly chastened expostulation and appeal.

CHAPTER IV.

EARNESTNESS IN THE MANNER OF PREACHING.

I NOW pass from matter to manner; and when I say manner, I wish to be understood as including in that term, not simply the method of communicating truth by voice and gesture, but the cast of thought and the style of composition in reference to the truth enunciated. What is wanted for the pulpit is a vivacious, in opposition to a stiff formal and dull, method. Style must of course, to a considerable extent, vary with the subject matter, and be regulated by it. In exegetical preaching, or in that part of a sermon which is merely expository, all that is required is calm perspicuity and a flow of clear, limpid, quiet thought, which shall instruct the understanding, and gently draw after it the heart, without being intended or expected in any great degree to move the passions. We have some beautiful specimens of this in the elegant discourses of Dr. Wardlaw. Well would it be if, after his manner, we could be critical without being pedantic; exegetical without being scholastic; and invest exposition with charms which would make it attractive to all our congregations. But though a careful analysis of the text should form the basis of almost all our sermons, there must be something more than mere

exegesis, however clear, correct, and instructive. We have to do not only with a dark intellect that needs to be informed, but with a hard heart that needs to be impressed, and a torpid conscience that needs to be awakened; we have to make our hearers feel that in the great business of religion, there is much to be done, as well as much to be known. We must impart knowledge, for light is as essential to the growth of piety in the spiritual world, as it is to the growth of vegetation in the natural one: and the analogy holds good in another point, we must not only let in light, but add great and vigorous labour to carry on the culture. We must therefore rise from exegesis into exhortation, warning, and expostulation. The apostle's manner is the right one, "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." We must not only direct but impel our hearers. They all know far more than they practise of the Bible: the head is generally far in advance of the heart; and our great business is to persuade, to entreat, to beseech. We have to deal with a dead heavy vis inertiæ of mind; yea more, we have to overcome a stout resistance, and to move a reluctant heart. If all that was necessary to secure the ends of our ministry were to lay the truth before the mind; if the heart were pre-disposed to the subject of our preaching, then like the lecturer on science, we might dispense with the hortatory manner, and confine ourselves exclusively to explanation. Logic unaccompanied by rhetoric would suffice; but when we find every sinner we address, acting in opposition to the dictates of his judgment, and the warnings of his conscience, as well as to the testimony of Scripture;

sacrificing the interests of his immortal soul to the vanities of the world, and the corruptions of his heart; madly bent upon his ruin, and rushing to the precipice from which he will take a fatal leap into perdition; can we, in that case, be satisfied with merely explaining, however clearly, and demonstrating, however conclusively, the truth of revelation? Should we think it enough coldly to unfold the sin of suicide, and logically to arrange the proofs of its criminality, before the man who had in his hand the pistol or the poison with which he was just about to destroy himself? Would a definition of the sin, however clear and accurate, be enough in this case? Should we not entreat, expostulate, beseech? Should we not lay hold of the arm uplifted for self-destruction, or snatch the poison cup from the hand that was about to apply it to the lip? What are the impenitent sinners to whom we preach, but individuals bent upon self-destruction, not indeed the destruction of their bodies, but of their souls? There they are before our eyes, rushing in their sins and their impenitence to the precipice that overhangs the pit of destruction; and shall we content ourselves with sermons, which however excellent they may be for elegance, for logic, for perspicuity, and even for evangelism, have no hortatory power, no moving tendency, none of the apostle's beseeching entreaty? Shall we merely lecture on theology, and deal out religious science, to men, who with a flood of light already pouring over them care for none of these things?

It is a question of not a little difficulty, how far the rules and methods of secular eloquence may be observed in the composition of sermons. The language of the

apostle in reference to his own preaching, has been thought to forbid all elaboration; "Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." A right understanding of his circumstances and ours, will show us that there are differences which forbid too rigid and literal an application of this sentiment to our own case. Miracles gave a potency to his preaching, which is wanting in ours. Besides, the wisdom here forbidden was not the selection of the best words, and placing them in the best order for the statement of divine truth, but that combination of false philosophy and artificial rhetoric which were the usual practice of the Grecian schools; what he forbade was such a method of setting forth evangelical doctrine as would have brought it into conformity, both as to matter and manner, with the fashionable systems of philosophy. Provided the effect of elaboration is to make a sermon at once perspicuous and impressive, to give it power to command the attention, and at the same time to instruct the judgment, engage the affections, and awaken the conscience; to render the subject clearly understood, and at the same time deeply felt, it cannot be too perfect. No preparation which causes the hearer to forget the preacher, and even the sermon, as a production of art, and to think only of himself and the subject; which rivets attention, and makes every one feel that he is in the presence not only of man, but of God; which declares the way of salvation so clearly that the most obtuse understanding can comprehend it, and at the same time so forcibly and touchingly that the dullest heart must feel it, cannot be wrong. If a preacher of the power of Demosthenes were to arise, he would,

and must, carry that power into the pulpit, and ought to do so. But on the other hand, an elaboration which makes it but too evident to every serious and observant mind that it was the preacher's aim not to convert souls, but to catch the applause of the fashionable, the giddy, and the frivolous; which fills the discourse with flowery diction and gaudy metaphors, with elegant declamations, or startling apostrophes, with fanciful descriptions, and beautiful pictures; which though it takes the cross for its subject, almost instantly leaves it and runs into the fields of poetry or the labyrinths of metaphysics, for subtle arguments, or sparkling and splendid illustrations; which to sum up all, exercises the judgment or amuses the imagination, but never moves the heart, or calls the conscience to discharge its severe and awful functions: such preaching may render a minister popular, secure him large congregations, and procure for him the plaudits of the multitude; but where are the sinners converted from the error of their way, and the souls saved from death? Verily if such a preacher has his reward only in the applause of the multitude, whose object and aim were as low as his own, it was what he sought, and all he sought, and let him not complain if he gain this, and nothing else. From such preachers may God Almighty preserve our churches, and may he give us men who better know their business in the pulpit, and better do it!

A simple, as opposed to an artificial and rhetorical style, is then essential to earnestness; for who can believe that man to be intent on saving souls, who seems to have laboured in his study only to make his sermon as fine as glittering imagery and high sounding diction could render it. I could as soon believe a phy-

sician to be intent on saving his fellow-creatures from death, who, when the plague was sweeping them into the grave, spent his time in scattering over his patients flowers or perfumes, or writing his prescriptions in beautiful characters and classical latinity.

There are some judicious remarks on the style of the pulpit in two papers which appeared some time since, one in the Edinburgh Review, and the other in the Quarterly, on Hare's "Village Sermons," those admirable models of simplicity. The object of the reviewer in the Quarterly is to illustrate the nature, to prove the necessity, and to urge the cultivation, of simplicity, especially in sermons to congregations composed in great measure of the poor. After giving a quotation or two in which Mr Hare had made mention of "smugglers and poachers," "tea and wheaten bread," the critic remarks,

"We have preachers in our time who would have flinched from expressions so natural and straightforward, and would infallibly have warned their poor people against holding any intercourse with the nocturnal marauder on the main or the manor; and have suggested to them the gratitude they owed for a fragrant beverage and farinaceous food. And so might Mr Hare, if his taste had been less correct, and his desire of doing good less earnest. Affectation is bad enough anywhere; in the pulpit it is intolerable."

In speaking of illustrations, the writer goes on to advert to the excessive quaintness which was one of the vices of sermons before, and about the time of, the Reformation :

"Accordingly within a century after the Reformation we find Thomas Fuller, the last man from natural temperament one would have thought likely to offer a caution upon such a subject, saying of the faithful minister, 'His similes and illustrations are always familiar, never contemptible. Indeed reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon, but similitudes are the windows which give the

best light. He avoids such stories whose mention may suggest bad thoughts to the auditors, and will not use a light comparison to make thereof a grave application, for fear lest his poison go further than his antidote.' Preaching therefore now took an opposite tack, and from having been certainly once too succulent, by the time of John Wesley had become sapless. This was one cause which rendered the new style of preaching adopted by him and his followers so attractive. The standard according to which the character of the imagery and diction of the pulpit of modern days was regulated, was not fixed before the divines of Queen Anne's time; as the vocabulary of poetry, according to Johnson, was not determined before the age of Dryden. In both cases the restraint has been injurious to the subject of it. There was a Doric simplicity, 'wood-notes wild,' in the poets before Dryden, for which the greater correctness, it may be, of those who have since lived is but a poor substitute; and there was a homely vigour in the sentiments and phraseology of the pulpit of the first and second Charles, which has been ill replaced by the decorous tameness of later times. Surely it is a morbid taste, and one that requires correction, which would kick at images that satisfied a Barrow; and yet we could point to numbers in his sermons which would now be rejected by the preacher, even the village preacher too, as mean and pedestrian. The familiar illustration, therefore, by which a subject is rendered clear to persons slow to apprehend, and interesting to persons hard to be excited, is a figure not lightly to be renounced in deference to the false refinement of the magnates of a congregation, though doubtless capable of abuse. We say false refinement, for there are parables both in the prophets and in the gospels, against which the same parties might raise the same objection." *

In a similar strain and with a like object, though with still more expansion of thought, a masterly writer in the Edinburgh Review remarks:

"We have long felt that the eloquence of the pulpit in its general character has never been assimilated so far as it might have been, and ought to have been, to that which has produced the greatest effects elsewhere, and which is shewn to be of the right kind, alike by the success which has attended it, and by an

* Quarterly Review, No. 117. [Now republished among the writings of the Rev. J. J. Blunt, late Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge.]

analysis of the qualities by which it has been distinguished. If we were compelled to give a brief definition of the truest style of eloquence, we should say it was 'practical reasoning,' animated by strong emotion; or if we might be indulged in what is rather a description than a definition of it, we should say that it consisted in reasoning on topics calculated to inspire a common interest, expressed in the language of ordinary life, and in that brief, rapid, familiar style, which natural emotion ever assumes. The former half of this description would condemn no small portion of the compositions called sermons, and the latter half a still larger portion.

"We would not be misunderstood. It is far, very far, from our intention to speak in terms of the slightest depreciation of the immense treasures of learning, of acute disquisition, of profound speculation, of powerful controversy, which the literature of the English pulpit exemplifies. In these points it cannot be surpassed. In vigour and originality of thought, in argumentative power, in extensive and varied erudition, it as far transcends all other literature of the same kind, as it is deficient in the qualities which are fitted to produce popular impression. We merely assert that the greater part of 'sermons' are not at all entitled to the name, if by it be meant discourses especially adapted to the object of instructing, convincing, or persuading the common mind."

After some admirably judicious remarks on the topics of the pulpit, designed to prove that these should be such as are calculated to inspire a common interest in the mass of a common audience, the writer goes on to speak of the manner of discussing them, and observes:

"Where the topics are not such as are fairly open to censure, a large class of preachers, especially amongst the young, grievously err by investing them with the technicalities of science and philosophy; either because they foolishly suppose they thereby give their compositions a more philosophical air, or because they disdain the homely and the vulgar. We remember hearing of a worthy man of this class, who having occasion to tell his audience the simple truth that there was not one gospel for the rich and another for the poor, informed them, 'that if they would not be saved on general principles, they could not be saved at all!' With such men it is not sufficient to say, that such and such a thing must be, but there is always 'a moral or physical necessity for it.' The 'will' is too old fashioned a thing to be mentioned, and every thing is done by 'volition;' duty is expanded

into 'moral obligation;' man not only ought to do this, that, or the other, it is always 'by some principle of their moral nature;' they not only like to do so and so, but 'they are impelled by some natural propensity;' men not only think and do, but they are never represented as thinking and doing without some parade of their 'intellectual processes and active powers.' Such discourses are full of 'moral beauty,' and 'necessary relations,' and 'philosophical demonstrations,' and 'laws of nature,' and 'a priori,' and 'a fortiori' arguments. If some simple fact of physical science is referred to in the way of argument or illustration, it cannot be presented in common language, but must be exhibited in the pomp of the most approved scientific technicalities. If there be a common and scientific name for the same object, ten to one that the latter is adopted. Heat straightway becomes 'caloric;' lightning, 'the electric fluid;' instead of plants and animals, we are surrounded by 'organised substances;' life is nothing half so good as 'the vital principle.' Not only is such language as this obscurely understood, or not understood at all; but even if perfectly understood, must necessarily be far less effective than those simple terms of common life, which for the most part may be substituted for them. The sermons of Augustus William Hare may serve to show how the abstract terms of philosophy may be advantageously translated into simple, racy English."*

So harmonious are the judgments, on the best style of preaching, of two writers belonging to very different schools of literature and religion, whose keen sarcasm it may be hoped will correct the pedantry at which it is aimed, and convince many an ambitious aspirant after popularity that whatever methods may secure the applause of the frivolous and the ignorant, simplicity is the only way to attain usefulness and to secure the approbation of the serious, the wise, and the good. An affectation of learning and science in the pulpit, is not only a sin against good taste, but betrays an utter want of that watching for immortal souls, which is or ought

* Edinburgh Review, No 145. "On the British Pulpit." [Now republished by the Rev. H. Rogers, Professor in the Lancashire Independent College.]

to be, the preacher's steady and constant aim. To borrow the homely, but forcible language of Doolittle,

"The eyeing of eternity should make us ministers painful and diligent in our studies to prepare a message of such weight as we come about, when preaching to men concerning everlasting matters, and should especially move us to be plain in our speech, that even the capacity of the weakest in the congregation, that hath an eternal soul that must be damned or saved, might understand in things necessary to salvation, what we mean, and aim, and drive at. It hath made me tremble to hear some soar aloft, that knowing men might know their parts, whilst the meaner sort are kept from the knowledge of it; and put their matter in such a dress of words, in such a style, so composed, that the most stand looking at the preacher in the face, and hear a sound, but know not what he saith, and while he doth pretend to feed them, doth indeed starve them. Would a man of any bowels of compassion go from a prince to a condemned man, and tell him in such a language that he should not understand the condition upon which the prince would pardon him, and then the poor man lose his life because the proud and haughty messenger must show his knack in delivering his message in fine English, which the condemned man could not understand?"

I shall introduce here a quotation from that great master of chaste eloquence, Robert Hall; whose opinion on any subject, but especially on that of the art of preaching, in which he was himself so extraordinary a proficient, is entitled to peculiar deference.

"A great diversity of talents must be expected to be found amongst them (the evangelical clergy); but it has not been our lot to hear of any, whose labours a good man would think it right to treat with indiscriminate contempt. As they are called for the most part, to address the middle and lower classes of society, their language is plain and simple: speaking in the presence of God, their address is solemn; and, 'as becomes the ambassadors of Christ,' their appeals to the conscience are close and cogent. Few, if any, among them aspire to the praise of consummate orators: a character which we despair of ever seeing associated, in high perfection, with that of a Christian teacher. The minister of the gospel is called to declare

the testimony of God, which is always weakened by a profuse employment of the ornaments of secular eloquence. Those exquisite paintings and nice touches of art, in which the sermons of the French preachers excel so much, excite a kind of attention, and produce a species of pleasure, not in perfect accordance with devotional feeling. The imagination is too much excited and employed, not to interfere with the more awful functions of conscience; the hearer is absorbed in admiration, and the exercise which ought to be an instrument of conviction, becomes a feast of taste. In the hand of a Massillon, the subject of death itself is blended with so many associations of the most delicate kind, and calls up so many sentiments of natural tenderness, as to become a source of theatrical amusement, rather than of religious sensibility. Without being insensible to the charms of eloquence, it is our decided opinion that a sermon of Mr Gisborne's is more calculated to 'convert a sinner from the error of his way,' than one of Massillon's. It is a strong objection to a studied attempt at oratory in the pulpit, that it usually induces a neglect of the peculiar doctrines of Christian verity, where the preacher feels himself restrained, and is under the necessity of explaining texts, of obviating objections, and elucidating difficulties, which limit the excursions of imagination, and confine it within narrow bounds. He is therefore eager to escape from these fetters, and, instead of 'reasoning out of the Scriptures,' expatiates in the flowery fields of declamation."

A want of powerful, eloquent, yet simple and unaffected exhortation, is among the greatest deficiencies of the modern pulpit. Let any one read the sermons of our great nonconformist predecessors, Clarkson, Doolittle, Manton, Howe, Owen, Bates, Flavel, and especially Baxter, and mark the all but overwhelming force of persuasion which is put forth in the application of their discourses; let him see how these great men exerted the mightiness of their strength to make all they said to the judgment, reach the heart and awaken the conscience. And to come to more modern times, let him read the sermons of Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, and Davies of New Jersey; and to advance to

still more modern productions, let him peruse the sermons of Mr. Parsons, Dr. Chalmers, and the best preachers on the other side of the Atlantic, Spring, Barnes, Skinner, Beecher, Griffin, Clarke, and Sprague: also Robert Hall's sermon on "Marks of Love to God," and Bradley's sermon on "Our Lamps are Gone Out," for fine specimens of this hortatory method; this bearing down with the whole power of the truth on the sinner's heart and conscience; this beseeching men to be reconciled to God. Some specimens of this method will be given in the following chapter. This is earnestness in preaching: when it is evident to the hearer that the preacher feels the truths he discusses; when it is manifest to all that he believes what he says, in affirming that his hearers are sinking into perdition, and that he is labouring to persuade them to forsake their evil courses: when his sermons are full of close, pointed, personal addresses; when, in short, through the whole discourse, he is seen moving onward from the understanding to a closer and closer approximation to the heart in the conclusion, and the hearer feels at length his hand seizing him with a mysterious and resistless power, and bearing him away, almost whether he will or no, to Christ, salvation, and heaven. The conviction of the judgment is not the ultimate object of good preaching; though it is the chief, if not the exclusive end of some preachers, if we are to judge by their manner of preaching; but they ought to know that the persuasion of the heart does not follow as a matter of course; that has still to be effected, and they have to undertake it as a distinct purpose, and to aim at it with a different sort of skill, and with a different in-

strumentality from that by which they chiefly work. Compel them to come in, was the method prescribed to the servants of the Lord who made a great feast, and sent out his invitations to the poor and needy. It is this compulsion we want; this earnest entreaty, this laying hold of the sinner, and making him feel that his salvation is with us an object of intense desire, and that we shall be bitterly disappointed if it be not accomplished.

CHAPTER V.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF EARNESTNESS COLLECTED FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Familiar as most readers of this work are with examples of the kind of manner intended, it will help to illustrate and enforce its nature, if a few extracts from different authors are here introduced, by way of specimens. Those which are here presented are not selected as possessing any thing very extraordinary, or as being the best of the kind that could be selected from the same authors; but they are sufficient to answer the purpose. Nor are they exhibited as models, to be in every particular imitated in modern composition, but as being pervaded by that one quality of intense earnestness, which it is the object of this work to recommend.

The first extract which shall be quoted is from a sermon of Mr. Doolittle. This eminent minister of Christ was ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, from the church of St. Alphage, London Wall. He was a man of extraordinary courage, power, and success, in preaching; and, after his expulsion from his living, educated young men for the ministry. The extract which follows is taken from a discourse contained in that valuable series called "The Morning Exercises," and is entitled "How we should eye Eternity,

so that it may have its influence on all we do." It is perhaps the most solemn and awful sermon in the English or any other language; it is sadly overcharged with terminology, which should be sparingly introduced, though it ought not to be altogether excluded from the pulpit, even in this fastidious age. The sickly sentimentalism which would "never mention hell to ears polite," should be abjured with as much disgust as gross familiarity with such awful realities. It was not only Doolittle's fault, but it was the vice of the age, to approach somewhat too near to the latter extreme. But then, after this admission is made, let us look at the burning and overwhelming earnestness of the sermon.

"Is there an eternal state: such unseen eternal joys and torments? Who then can sufficiently lament the blindness, madness, and folly of this distracted world, and the unreasonableness of those that have rational and eternal souls, to see them busily employed in the matters of time, which are only for time, in present honours, pleasures, and profits, while they do neglect everlasting things; everlasting life and death is before them, everlasting joy or torment is hard at hand; and yet poor sinners take no care how to avoid the one, or obtain the other. Is it not matter of lamentation to see so many thousands bereaved of the sober serious use of their understandings? That while they use their reason to get the riches of this world, they will not act as rational men to get the joys of heaven, and will avoid temporal calamities, yet not escape eternal misery. Or if they be fallen into present afflictions, they contrive how they may get out of them: if they be sick, reason tells them they must use the means if they would be well: if they be in pain, nature puts them on to seek after a remedy; and yet these same men neglect all duty, and cast away all care concerning everlasting matters: they are for seen pleasures and profits which are passing from them in the enjoyment of them; but the unseen eternal glory in heaven they pray not for, they think not of. Are they unjustly charged? Let conscience speak what thoughts they lie down withal upon their pillow; if they wake, or sleep fly from them in the silent night, what a noise doth the care of the world make in their souls? With what thoughts do they rise in the

morning? Of God, or of the world? Of the things of time, or of eternity? Their thoughts are in their shops before they have been in heaven; and many desires after visible temporal gain, before they have had one desire after the invisible, eternal God, and treasures that are above. What do they do all the day long? What is it that hath their endeavours, all their labour and travel? Their most painful industry and unwearied diligence? Alas! their consciences will tell themselves, and their practices tell others, when there is trading, but no praying; buying and selling, but no religious duties performed: the shop-book is often opened, but the sacred book of God is not looked into all the week long.

"O Lord! forgive the hardness of my heart that I can see such insufferable folly among reasonable creatures, and can lament this folly no more: good Lord, forgive the want of compassion in me that can stand and see this distraction in the world, as if the most of men had lost their wits and were quite beside themselves, and yet my bowels yearn no more towards immortal souls that are going to unseen miseries in the eternal world; to see distracted men busy in doing things that tend to no account, is not such an amazing sight as to see men that have reason for the world, to use it not for God, and Christ, and their own eternal good: to see them love and embrace a present dunghill world, and cast away all serious, affecting, and effectual thoughts of the life to come: to see them rage against the God of heaven, and cry out against holiness as foolish preciseness, and serious godliness as madness and melancholy.

"Let us call the whole creation of God to lament and bewail the folly of man that was made the best of all God's visible works, but now by such wickedness is bad beyond them all; being made by God for an everlasting state, and yet minds nothing less than that for which he was principally made.

"O sun! why is it not thy burden to give light to men to do those works and walk in those ways that bring them to eternal darkness? O earth! why dost thou not groan to bear such burdensome fools that dig into thy bowels for gold and silver, while they do neglect everlasting treasures in the eternal world? O ye sheep and oxen! fish and fowl! why do ye not cry out against them that take away your present life to maintain them in being, but only mind present things, but forget the eternal God that gave them dominion over you, to live upon you, while they had time to mind eternal things, but do not? O ye angels of God, and blessed saints in heaven, were ye capable of grief and sorrow, would not ye bitterly lament the sin and

folly of poor mortals upon earth? Could ye look down from that blessed place where ye do dwell and behold the joy and glory which is to us unseen, and see how it is basely slighted by the sons of men, if ye were not above sorrow and mourning, would not ye take this up for a bitter lamentation? O ye saints on earth! whose eyes are open to see what the blind deluded world doth not see, do ye bitterly take on, let your heads be fountains of water, and your eyes send forth rivers of tears for the great neglect of eternal joys and happiness of heaven. Can you see men going out of time into eternity in their sin and in their blood, in their guilt and unconverted state, and your hearts not be moved? your bowels not yearn? Have ye spent all your tears in bewailing your own sin, that your eyes are dry when you behold such monstrous madness and unparalleled folly of so many, with whom daily ye converse? Ye sanctified parents, have ye no pity for your ungodly children? Nor sanctified children, for ungodly parents?"

The next extract I shall present is from holy Baxter, under whose ministry Doolittle was converted, and from whom he appears to have borrowed his own manner of preaching.

"O sirs, they are no trifles or jesting matters that the gospel speaks of. I must needs profess to you that when I have the most serious thoughts of these things, I am ready to wonder that such amazing matters do not overwhelm the souls of men: that the greatness of the subject doth not so overmatch our understandings and affections as even to drive men besides themselves, but that God hath always somewhat allayed it by distance; much more do I wonder that men should be so blockish as to make light of such things. O Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are! Would they then hear us as they do? Would they read and think of these things as they do? I profess I have been ready to wonder when I have heard such weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation; and much more do I wonder how they can rest till they have gone to their ministers, and learned what they shall do to be saved, that this great business should be put out of doubt. O that heaven and hell should work no more upon men! O that eternity should work no more! O how can you forbear when you are alone to think with yourselves what it is to be everlasting in joy or torment! I wonder that such

thoughts do not break your sleep, and that they do not crowd into your minds when you are about your labour! I wonder how you can almost do any thing else! How can you have any quietness in your minds? How can you eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting consolations? Is that a man or a corpse that is not affected with matters of this moment; that can be readier to sleep than to tremble when he hears how he must stand at the bar of God? Is that a man or a clod of clay that can rise up and lie down without being deeply affected with his everlasting state; that can follow his worldly business and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation, and that when he knows it is so hard at hand? Truly, sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the best saints upon earth that they are no better, and do no more, in so weighty a case. I wonder at those whom the world accounts more holy than needs, and scorns for making so much ado, that they can put off Christ and their souls with so little; that they do not pour out their souls in every prayer; that they are not more taken up with God; that their thoughts are not more serious in preparation for their last account. I wonder that they are not a thousand times more strict in their lives, and more laborious and unwearied for the crown than they are. And for myself, as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life, so the Lord knows I am ashamed of every sermon that I preach: when I think what I am, and who sent me, and how much the salvation and damnation of men is concerned in it, I am ready to tremble lest God should judge me a slighter of the truth and the souls of men, and lest in my best sermons I should be guilty of their blood. Methinks we should not speak a word to men in matters of such consequence without tears, or the greatest earnestness that possibly we can. Were we not too much guilty of the sin which we reprove, it would be so. Whether we are alone or in company, methinks our end, and such an end, should still be in our mind, and as before our eyes; and we should sooner forget any thing, or set light by any thing, or by all things, than by this."

The third extract is from the works of that great and serene spirit, John Howe; whose surpassing grandeur of thought and expression places him far above all his compeers. His sermon on the "Inquiry whether or no we truly love God," is one of the finest pieces of

solemn, heart-searching expostulation, which can be found in the whole range of English theology: I give from it the following pages, the spirit of which should enter into the soul of every minister and student who reads them.

"For further direction take heed of passing a false judgment in this case, a judgment contrary to the truth: for,

"First, That is to no purpose, it will avail thee nothing, you cannot be advantaged by it, for yours is not the supreme judgment. There will be another and superior judgment to yours, that will control and reverse your false judgment, and make it signify nothing; it is therefore to no purpose.

"Secondly, It is a great piece of insolency, for it will be to oppose your judgment to his certain and most authorized one; who, if this be your case, hath already judged it, and tells you, 'I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.' It belongs to him by office to judge: 'The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son,' as a little above in this chapter; From which will you depose him? dethrone him? disannul his judgment? condemn him? that you may be righteous? (to borrow that, Job xl, 8.)

"Thirdly, It is most absurd, supposing such characters as you have heard do conclude a man in this case, yet to judge himself a lover of God. If against the evidence of such characters a man should pronounce the wrong judgment, it would be the most unreasonable and absurd thing imaginable; for then let us but suppose how that wronged judgment must lie related to those fore-mentioned characters, that have been given you. Let me remind you of some of them, he that never put forth the act of love to God cannot say he hath the principle, he that is not inclined to do good to others, for the sake of God, 1 John iii, 17: he that indulges himself in the inconsistent love of this world, 1 John ii, 15: he that lives not in obedience to his known laws, John xiv, 14; 1 John v, 3, with many more. Now if you will pass a judgment of your case against the evidence of such characters, come forth then, let the matter be brought into clear sight, put your sense into plain words, and this it will be: 'I am a lover of God, or I have the love of God in me, though I cannot tell that ever I put forth one act of love towards him in all my life; I have the love of God in me, though I never knew what it meant to do good to any for his sake,

against the express words of Scripture: How dwelleth the love of God in such a man? I have the love of God in me, though I have constantly indulged myself in that which he maketh an inconsistent love, 'Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' I have the love of God in me, though I would never allow him to rule me, though I never kept his commandments with a design to please him, and comply with his will. I have the love of God in me, though I never valued his love. I have the love of God in me, though I never cared for his image, for his presence, for his converse, for his interest and honour.' I beseech you consider how all this will sound! Can any thing be more absurdly spoken? and shall it be upon such improbabilities or impossibilities as these, that any man will think it fit to venture his soul? 'I will pawn my soul upon it, I will run the hazard of my soul upon it; I am a lover of God for all this!' Would you venture any thing else so besides your soul? Would you venture a finger so, an eye so? It is to place the name where there is nothing of the thing; it is to place the name of a thing upon its contrary. The soul of man cannot be an indifferency towards God; but if there be not love and propension, there is aversion, and that is hatred. And what! is hatred to be called love? If you bear that habitual disposition of the soul towards God, to go all the day long with no inclination towards him; no design to please him, to serve him, to glorify him; if this be your habitual temper and usual course, will you call this love? Shall this contrariety to the love of God be called love to him? You may as well call water fire, or fire water, as so grossly misname things here; and therefore again,

"That we may advance somewhat; plainly and positively pass the true judgment. If the characters that you have heard do carry the matter so, come at last plainly and positively to pass the true judgment of your own case, though it be a sad one: and tell your own souls, 'Oh my soul! though I must sadly say it, I must say it, all things conclude and make against thee: the love of God is not in thee.' Why is it not as good this should be the present issue at your own bar, and at the tribunal of your own conscience, as before God's judgment seat? Why should you not concur and fall in with Christ, the authorized Judge, whose judgment is according to truth? Why this is a thing that must be done, the case requires it, and God's express word requires it, 1 Cor. xi, 31. Other previous and preparatory duty plainly enjoined, doth by consequence enjoin it, and

requires that it follow, 2 Cor. xiii, 5. What is examination for, but in order to judgment? It must therefore be done, and I shall show how it must be done, and proceed to some further directions.

First, You must do it solemnly. Take yourselves aside at some fit season or another, inspect your own souls, review your life, consider what your wonted frame, and your ordinary course has been. And if you find by such characters as heretofore were given, this is the truth of your case, then let judgment pass upon deliberation: 'Oh my soul! thou hast not the love of God in thee, whatsoever thine appearances hitherto have been; and whatsoever thy peace and quiet hath been, thou hast not the love of God in thee." Let it be done with solemnity.

"Secondly, Do it in the sight of God, as before him, as under his eye, as under the eye of Christ. That eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches hearts, and tries reins; arraign thyself before him. 'Lord, I have here brought before thee a guilty soul, a delinquent soul, wretchedly and horridly delinquent, a soul that was breathed into me by thee, an intelligent, understanding soul, a soul that hath love in its nature, but a soul that never loved thee.'

"Thirdly, Judge thyself before him as to the fact, and as to the fault. As to the fact: 'I have never yet loved thee, O God, I own it to thee; Lord, I accuse, I charge my soul with this before thee, this is the truth of the fact, I have not the love of God in me.' And charge thyself with the fault. 'Oh horrid creature that I am! I was made by thee, and don't love thee; thou didst breathe into me this reasonable, immortal spirit, and it doth not love thee; it is thine own offspring, and does not love thee. It can never be blessed in any thing but thee, and it does not love thee!' And then hereupon,

"Fourthly, Join to this, self-judging and self-loathing. That we are to judge ourselves is a law laid upon us by the supreme Lawgiver, the one Lawgiver, that hath power to save and to destroy. And his word that enjoins it, as plainly tells us what must go with it, that this self-judging must be accomplished with self-loathing, Ezek. vi, 9; xx, 43, and xxxvi, 31. Do God that right upon thyself that thou mayest tell him, 'Blessed God! I do even hate myself, because I find I have not loved thee; and I cannot but hate myself, and I never will be reconciled to myself, till I find I am reconciled to thee.' This is doing justice, doth not the Scripture usually and familiarly so represent to us the great turn of the soul to God; when poor sinners become penitents and return, that they are brought to hate themselves, and loathe themselves in their own eyes? And is there any

thing that can make a soul so loathsome in itself, or ought to make it so loathsome to itself, as not to love God, to be destitute of the love of God? And then,

"Fifthly, Hereupon too, pity thyself, pity thy own soul. There is cause to hate it, to loathe it, and is there no cause to pity it, to lament it? Doth not this look like a lamentable case, 'Oh! what a soul have I that can love any thing else, that can love trifles, that can love impurities, that can love sin; and cannot love God, Christ, the most desirable good of souls? What a soul have I! What a monster in the creation of God is this soul of mine!' Methinks you should set yourselves, if any of you can find this to be the case, to weep over your own souls. Some may see cause to say, 'Oh, my soul! thou hast in thee other valuable things, thou hast understanding in thee, judgment in thee, wit in thee; perhaps learning, considerable acquired endowments in thee; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. I can do many other commendable or useful things, I can discourse plausibly, argue subtlely, I can manage affairs dexterously, but I cannot love God. Oh my soul, how great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! The one thing necessary thou wantest; thou hast every thing but what thou needest more than any thing, more than all things; and oh my soul, what is like at this rate to become of thee? Where art thou to have thy eternal abode? To what regions of horror and woe art thou going? What society can be fit for thee? No lover of God no lover of God! what, but of infernal, accursed spirits, that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy vital light shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, oh my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom, thy no love to God is thy own doom, thy eternal doom; creates thee a present hell, and shows whither thou belongest.'

"Sixthly, * * * All disobedience and rebellion is summed up in this one word, Having been no lover of God; and won't it make any man's heart to meditate terror, to think of having such a charge as this likely to lie against him in the judgment of that day; that day, when the secrets of all hearts are to be laid open? Every work must then be brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. xii, 14. And it will be to the confusion of many an one. It may be your no love of God was heretofore a great secret, you had a heart in which was no love of God, but it was a secret, you took not care to have it writ on your forehead; you conversed with men so plausibly, nobody took you to

be no lover of God, to have a heart disaffected to God. But now out comes the secret, that which you kept for a great secret all your days, out comes the secret; and to have such a secret as this disclosed to that vast assembly, before angels and men. Here was a creature, a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the divine bounty and goodness so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible show and external profession of great devotedness to God, all the time of his abode in that world: oh, what a fearful thing would it be to have this secret so disclosed! And do you think that all the loyal creatures that shall be spectators and auditors in the hearing of that great day will not all conceive a just and loyal indignation against such an one when convicted of not loving God; convicted of not loving him that gave him breath, him whose he was, and to whom he belonged, whose name he bore? What a fearful thing will it be to stand convicted so upon such a point as this! And sure in the meantime there is great reason for continual fear, why a man's heart should meditate terror! One would even think that all the creation should be continually every moment in arms against him! One would be afraid that every wind that blows should be a deadly blast to destroy me: that when the sun shines upon me, all its beams should be turned into vindictive flames to execute vengeance upon me! I would fear that even the very stones in the streets should fly against me, and every thing that meets me be my death! For what? I have not the love of God in me! What, to go about the streets from day to day with a heart void of the love of God!"

The next extract is from Jonathan Edwards' sermon, on "Pressing into the Kingdom of God." This extraordinary man presents a remarkable proof and illustration that the most acute logician and the most subtle metaphysician may be at the same time the most earnest preacher. His sermons are some of the most impressive and alarming we have, but certainly not a little wanting in the tenderness and melting pathos of the gospel of salvation. They may be read with admirable effect to teach us how to expound the nature and enforce the obligations of the moral law so as to awaken the slumbering conscience of the unconverted

sinner. His astonishing usefulness shows the adaptation of his preaching to the age and state of society in which he lived, but this method could not be rigidly followed, except in its earnestness, in the present day.

"1. I would address myself to such as yet remain unawakened. It is an awful thing that there should be any one person remaining secure amongst us at such a time as this; but yet it is to be feared that there are some of this sort. I would here a little expostulate with such persons.

"When do you expect that it will be more likely that you shall be awakened and wrought upon than now? You are in a Christless condition; and yet without doubt intend to go to heaven; and therefore intend to be converted some time before you die; but this is not to be expected till you are first awakened, and deeply concerned about the welfare of your soul, and brought earnestly to seek God's converting grace. And when do you intend that this shall be? How do you lay things out in your own mind, or what projection have you about this matter? Is it ever so likely that a person will be awakened, as at such a time as this? How do we see many who before were secure, now roused out of their sleep, and crying, What shall I do to be saved? But you are yet secure! Do you flatter yourself that it will be more likely you should be awakened when it is a dull and dead time? Do you lay matters out thus in your own mind, that though you are senseless when others are generally awakened, that yet you shall be awakened when others are generally senseless? Or do you hope to see another such time of the pouring out of God's Spirit hereafter? And do you think it will be more likely that you should be wrought upon then than now? And why do you think so? Is it because then you shall be so much older than you are now, and so that your heart will be grown softer and more tender with age, or because you will then have stood out so much longer against the calls of the gospel, and all means of grace? Do you think it more likely that God will give you the needed influences of his Spirit then than now, because then you will have provoked him so much more and your sin and guilt will be so much greater? And do you think it will be any benefit to you to stand it out through the present season of grace, as proof against the extraordinary means of awakening there are? Do you think that this will be a good preparation for a saving work of the Spirit hereafter?

"2. What means do you expect to be awakened by? As to the awakening awful things of the Word of God, you have had those set before you times without number, in the most moving manner that the dispensers of the word have been capable of. As to particular solemn warnings, directed to those that are in your circumstances, you have had them frequently, and have them now from time to time. Do you expect to be awakened by awful providences? Those also you have lately had, of the most awakening nature, one after another. Do you expect to be moved by the deaths of others? We have lately had repeated instances of these. There have been deaths of old and young: the year has been remarkable for the deaths of young persons in the bloom of life, and some of them very sudden deaths. Will the conversion of others move you? There is indeed scarce any thing that is found to have so great a tendency to stir persons up as this; and this you have been tried with of late in frequent instances; but are hitherto proof against it. Will a general pouring out of the Spirit, and seeing a concern about salvation amongst all sorts of people, do it? This means you now have, but without effect. Yea, you have all these things together; you have the solemn warnings of God's word, and awful instances of death, and the conversion of others, and see a general concern about salvation; but altogether do not move you to any great concern about your own precious, immortal, and miserable soul. Therefore consider by what means it is that you expect ever to be awakened.

"You have heard that it is probable some who are now awakened, will never obtain salvation; how dark then does it look upon you that remain stupidly unawakened! Those who are not moved at such a time as this, come to adult age, have reason to fear whether they are not given up to judicial hardness. I do not say they have reason to conclude it, but they have reason to fear it. How dark doth it look upon you, that God comes and knocks at so many persons' doors, and misses yours! that God is giving the strivings of his Spirit so generally amongst us, while you are left senseless!

"3. Do you expect to obtain salvation without ever seeking it? If you are sensible that there is a necessity of your seeking in order to obtaining, and ever intend to seek, one would think you could not avoid it at such a time as this. Inquire therefore whether you intend to go to heaven, living all your days a secure, negligent, careless life; Or,

"4. Do you think you can bear the damnation of hell? Do you imagine that you can tolerably endure the devouring fire and ever-

lasting burnings? Do you hope that you shall be able to grapple with the vengeance of God Almighty, when he girds himself with strength, and clothes himself with wrath? Do you think to strengthen yourself against God, and to be able to make your part good with him? 1 Cor. x, 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Do you flatter yourself that you shall find out ways for your ease and support, and to make it out tolerably well, to bear up your spirit in those everlasting burnings that are prepared for the devil and his angels? Ezek. xvii, 14. 'Can thine heart endure or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?' It is a difficult thing to conceive what such Christless persons think, that are unconcerned at such a time."

The following extract is from that first of all preachers, Whitfield; and who that considers the circumstances under which these flaming periods were enunciated, and the feeling and action which accompanied their delivery, can wonder at the effects they produced?

"Beseeching Sinners. O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden but powerful presence of Christ, whilst I am preaching to you. Indeed it is sweet, it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you, who without cause are my enemies, is, that you felt the like. Believe me, though it would be hell to my soul to return to a natural state again, yet I would willingly change states with you for a little while, that you might know what it is to have Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith. Do not turn your backs; do not let the devil hurry you away; be not afraid of convictions; do not think worse of the doctrine because preached without the church walls. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, preached on a mount, in a ship, and in a field; and I am persuaded many have felt his gracious presence here. Indeed, we speak what we know. Do not reject the kingdom of God against yourselves; be so wise as to receive our witness. I cannot, I will not, let you go; stay a little, let us reason together. However lightly you may esteem your souls, I know our Lord has set an unspeakable value on them. He thought them worthy of his most precious blood. I beseech you therefore O sinners, be ye reconciled to God. I hope you do not fear being accepted in the Beloved. Behold, he calleth you: behold, he prevents and follows you with his mercy, and hath

sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges, to compel you to come in. Remember then, that at such an hour of such a day, in such a year, in this place, you were all told what you ought to think concerning Jesus Christ. If you now perish, it will not be for lack of knowledge: I am free from the blood of you all. You cannot say I have, like legal preachers, been requiring you to make bricks without straw. I have not bidden you to make yourselves saints, and then come to God; but I have offered you salvation on as cheap terms as you can desire. I have offered you Christ's whole wisdom, Christ's whole righteousness, Christ's whole sanctification and eternal redemption, if you will but believe on him. If you say you cannot believe, you say right; for faith, as well as every other blessing, is the gift of God: but then wait upon God, and who knows but he may have mercy upon thee? Why do we not entertain more loving thoughts of Christ? Or do you think he will have mercy on others, and not on you? But are you not sinners? And did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners? If you say you are the chief of sinners, I answer, that will be no hindrance to your salvation; indeed it will not, if you lay hold on him by faith. Read the evangelists, and see how kindly he behaved to his disciples, who fled from and denied him: 'Go tell my brethren,' says he. He did not say, Go tell those traitors: but 'Go tell my Brethren, and Peter;' as though he had said, Go tell my brethren, in general, and poor Peter in particular, that I am risen:' O comfort his poor drooping heart, tell him I am reconciled to him; bid him weep no more so bitterly; for though with oaths and curses he thrice denied me, yet I have died for his sins, I am risen again for his justification; I freely forgive him all. Thus slow to anger and of great kindness was our all-merciful High Priest. And do you think he has changed his nature, and forgets poor sinners, now he is exalted on the right hand of God? No, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and sitteth there only to make intercession for us. Come then, ye harlots; come, ye publicans; come, ye most abandoned of sinners, come and believe on Jesus Christ. Though the whole world despise you and cast you out, yet he will not disdain to take you up. O amazing, O infinitely condescending love! even you he will not be ashamed to call his brethren. How will you escape, if you neglect such a glorious offer of salvation? What would the damned spirits, now in the prison of hell, give, if Christ was so freely offered to their souls! And why are not we lifting up our eyes in torments? Does any one out of this great multitude dare say, he does not deserve damnation? If not, why are we left, and others

taken away by death? What is this but an instance of God's free grace, and a sign of his good-will towards us? Let God's goodness lead us to repentance! O let there be joy in heaven over some of you repenting! Though we are in a field, I am persuaded the blessed angels are hovering now around us, and do long, 'as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' to sing an anthem at your conversion. Blessed be God, I hope their joy will be fulfilled. An awful silence appears amongst us. I have good hope that the words which the Lord has enabled me to speak in your ears this day, have not altogether fallen to the ground. Your tears and deep attention are an evidence that the Lord God is amongst us of a truth. Come ye pharisees, come and see, in spite of your fanatical rage and fury, the Lord Jesus is getting himself the victory. And, brethren, I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not: if one soul of you by the blessing of God be brought to think savingly of Jesus Christ this day, I care not if my enemies were permitted to carry me to prison, and put my feet fast in the stocks, as soon as I have delivered this sermon. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may be saved. For this cause I follow my Master without the camp. I care not how much of his sacred reproach I bear, so that some of you be converted from the error of your ways. I rejoice, yea and I will rejoice. Ye men, ye devils, do your worst: the Lord who sent will support me. And when Christ, who is our life, and whom I have now been preaching, shall appear, I also, together with his despised little ones, shall appear with him in glory. And then what will you think of Christ? I know what you will think of him. You will think him to be the fairest among ten thousand; you will then think and feel him to be a just and sin-avenging Judge. Be ye then persuaded to kiss him lest he be angry, and so you be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord. Behold I come to you as the angel did to Lot. Flee, flee for your lives; haste, linger no longer in your spiritual Sodom, for otherwise you will be eternally destroyed. Numbers no doubt there are amongst you that may regard me no more than Lot's son-in-law regarded him. I am persuaded I seem to some of you as one that mocketh: but I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not; as sure as fire and brimstone was rained from the Lord out of heaven, to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, so surely at the great day shall the vials of God's wrath be poured on you, if you do not think seriously of, and act agreeably to, the gospel of the Lord's Christ. Behold, I have told you before; and I pray God, all you that forget him may

seriously think of what has been said, before he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you."

Not to multiply these extracts unnecessarily, I give one more from a preacher, who is, perhaps without any exception, the most impressive living example of earnestness, both in matter and manner, I mean Mr. Parsons, of York.

"Oh, do not deceive yourselves! I would strive to tear away the veil. I tell you, O ye whose 'goodness has been as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away,' if unchanged you die, and if unchanged you stand before the dread tribunal where an account must be rendered of all providences, all immunities, and all feelings, you will be found fatally wanting, and will hear a sentence of condemnation that will consign you to realms of everlasting despair. As true as that Jehovah lives, is it that he will thus execute the fierceness of his indignation. Abodes of sorrow await you, where every past benefit will but be an instrument of torture; where memory and conscience will hold up the mirror of bygone privilege and promise, of abused mercy, of foresworn and perjured vows, only that remorse may strike upon the soul its more than scorpion sting, and where grace and hope can never alleviate the wailings that will reverberate through the dungeons of outer darkness for ever and for ever! Your doom will be more tremendous precisely in proportion to the means you possessed, and the signs you gave, of averting it: Can any doom be worse than yours? When these 'terrors of the Lord' are expounded, say if there be not an argument of mighty force why you should now beware, and why you should now hear the voice of God, lest you should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and lest he should swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest."

"But once more, to appeal to those for whom this address has been particularly designed. That such there are, I know, I could turn round and fix my eye, and rest my hand, on persons by whom, if so arraigned, the accusation of the text could not be denied or evaded. You have been again visited by the instrumentality which is adapted for the impression of the heart. Do not reject it; do not let it have that insufficient influence which is but to be dissipated for the world, and which makes the end worse than the beginning. No, nothing will avail but the entire surrender of the soul to him who gave it, the determination to live to Christ, and to glory only in

his cross. In the name of the great God, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, I do now adjure you, that you trifle not a moment longer, that you delay not a moment longer, that you resist not a moment longer: 'Come and return unto the Lord:' let this be a season of consideration; let this be a season of repentance; let this be a season of prayer; let this be a season of dedication to your God. Now, my hearers, now!

"Ministers and people must part once more. The book must be closed again; the voice must be silent again; the congregation must retire again. O, Spirit of God, perform thy work! 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!' Let there not be one here before thee, of whom, when yonder heavens shall be on fire, and when this earth shall be burned up, it shall be found that their 'goodness was as a morning cloud, and that as the early dew it went away.'

These extracts will illustrate what I mean by earnestness better than any language which I have employed or could select, and they appear to me to answer well to the apostolic method of beseeching entreaty. I do not of course insist that the pulpit should be restricted to the specific variety of preaching which we designate the hortatory method, under which classification these specimens must all be placed. There should be exegesis, as well as application; exposition, as well as expostulation. The judgment must be enlightened, in order that the heart may be impressed, and the conscience awakened; and the believer edified, no less than the sinner converted; and for this a less impassioned strain of preaching will not only suffice, but will indeed be more appropriate. Yet with regard to that portion of our public ministrations, and it should be no small portion of it, which has reference to the conversion of the impenitent, where shall we find better models on which to construct our sermons, than the Doolittles, the Howes, the Baxters, and the Whitfields of former times, so far at least as their intense

earnestness is concerned. It is true the moderns have improved upon these men in matters of taste, in reference to which we do not of course hold them up for imitation. In their numerous and complicated divisions and subdivisions, through which, as so many little rills and channels, they poured the current of their thought, instead of causing it to roll onward in the channel of their sermon with the majestic flow of a noble river; in their quaintnesses and quirks; in their fantastic imagery and uncouth diction; in the occasional grossness and vulgarity, in which some of them were but too prone to indulge; they mark errors to be avoided. Yet even in reference to some of these things, it may be affirmed, that though in their free and reckless resort to every mode of stimulating attention, they were often betrayed into great violations of taste, the very same audacity of genius often produced felicities of imagery and diction, with which the blameless common place and the accurate insipidity of many modern discourses will not bear any comparison either for beauty or effect. For pregnancy of thought, for knowledge of the Word of God, for raciness of style, for evangelical sentiment, for anatomy of the human heart, for closeness of application, and especially for intensity of feeling, where shall we find their equals? They preached to their congregations, and not merely before them: they felt that the objects of their addresses were immortal souls in danger of being lost, and knew their business in the pulpit was to save those souls from perdition: they preached as if they expected there and then to achieve the great work of conversion; and felt as if the eternal destinies of their hearers were suspended on the manner in which they discharged their duties,

and as if they were to ascend the next moment after they had finished their sermons to give an account of them at the bar of God. Do not the extracts given, (and they are but a very inadequate sample of their works,) bear out these asertions? The power they exhibit, the heart-searching appeals in which they abound, are the very things now wanting. There may be, and there should be, more of classic elegance, more of logical arrangement, of philosophic precision, of vigorous and clear argumentation, than we find in the old writers; but still, combined with this, there should also be in our sermons, as there were in theirs, the pointed interrogation, the pungent appeal, the bold apostrophe, the gush of feeling, the forcible expostulation, and the tender invitation; now the gentle flow of deep, and solemn, and placid thought, and then the torrent-rush of impassioned sentiment: the beautiful and harmonious combination of reason, imagination, and affection; and all employed to carry out the purpose for which the gospel is to be preached, even to win souls to Christ. Especially should there be the direct personal address which characterises all the extracts which I have introduced. Our hearers must be made to feel that they are not merely listening to the discussion of a subject, but to an appeal to themselves: their attention must be kept up, and a close connection between them and the preacher maintained, by the frequent introduction of the pronoun "you;" so that each may realise the thought that the discourse is actually addressed to him. Many preachers do not come near enough to their congregations. Those who were privileged to hear Mr Hall deliver, in his best days, some of his most popular and powerful discourses, will not fail to recollect

how strikingly he combined the intense earnestness of the passages just quoted, with the chaste and classic elegance of our best writers; and thus, considering the evangelical strain of his preaching he may be said to have poured forth a torrent of the water of life, clear as crystal. He reminded you of one, who in his yearnings for the salvation of sinners seemed to feel that language was too feeble an instrument for such a purpose: and who, notwithstanding his sovereign command and exquisite selection of terminology, was struggling to burst the barrier by which words limit the communication of thought, in order that he might by a still more direct and facile method reach and grasp the soul of his hearers.

There is, however, hope that our old theological writers will not be quite forgotten or neglected, while such men as Professor Stowell, of Rotherham College, employ their talents in writing prefaces to reprints of works such as those of Thomas Adams, and lend their authority to recommend the perusal of such monuments of sanctified genius. Beautifully and no less correctly has he said, "As Edwards constrains to closeness of thought; as Howe inspires sublimity of sentiment; as Bates lights up the soul with a soft and silvery light; as Owen loads the mind with a harvest of rich knowledge; as Taylor cheers the imagination with a vintage of delicious grapes; as Baxter fires the soul with longings for salvation, first of ourselves and then of others; even so does Adams lead to those springs of graphic power, of dramatic grandeur, and of subduing pathos, which it is the fear of many are dried up. We believe they are not. We cannot but think there are minds now opening on the awful solemnities of the Christian

ministry, to whom this example will be inciting; let them look at the things with their own eyes, ponder them in silent and lonely thought, pray over the fruits of such meditations, till they kindle into living pictures; and so let them pour out their feelings into the best words they can find; there will then be no just complaint of the want of power and originality in the English pulpit."

Happy will it be for this, and for all coming ages, if the men of the present day will study, with all the advantages, checks, and guides of modern education, the divines of the seventeenth century, both of the Episcopalian and Nonconformist churches: not indeed as models of style or logic, but of intense earnestness; not as writers who should teach us in all things how to think, but how to feel. I would not have the modern mind, so much as the modern heart, cast in the mould of these great-hearted writers. Even their theology is not to be rigidly copied; but O! their unction; their mighty power of realization; their nearness to God; their views, so intent, so clear, so piercing, of eternity; their thorough understanding of the object of their ministry, and their entire consecration of themselves to its awful functions. Would we could transcribe and make all these our own.

CHAPTER VI.

EARNESTNESS OF MANNER CONTINUED, AS MANIFESTED IN THE DELIVERY OF SERMONS.

Demosthenes, on being asked what was the first excellence of an orator, replied, "Delivery:" what the second, "Delivery:" what the third, "Delivery." An impressive admonition this, from such an authority, to all preachers, on the importance of that part of our subject which we are now considering.

After the death of that seraphic man Mr McCheyne, there was found upon his desk an unopened note from one who had heard his last sermon, to this effect; "Pardon a stranger for addressing to you a few lines. I heard you preach last Sabbath evening, and it pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, as your manner of speaking it, that struck me. I saw in you a beauty of holiness I never saw before."

"This is only one instance out of ten thousand, in which the earnestness of a preacher's manner has secured that attention to his matter, which would not otherwise have been paid to it. The power of oratory has its foundations in the principles of our nature. It is not merely that ideas are conveyed by articulate language through the ear to the mind, but also that emotion is awakened by agreeable tones and pleasant

modulations of the voice. Hence the power of music: and what is human speech but music? No instrument has ever yet been constructed which can emit sounds so exquisitely moving as the human voice. Art is in this respect still below nature. True it is that we must go to the best voices for this superiority; but even in voices far below the best, there is an expression of the various passions which no instruments can equal. All nations, therefore, savage as well as civilised, have confessed the power of oratory, not only as a vehicle of instruction, but as a means of impression. It is vain to pretend that matter is or ought to be every thing and manner nothing. Truth, it may be said, ought to make its own way, independently of the accompaniments of good elocution and graceful action. So it should, but these things are necessary, in many cases, to gain for it attention, and to secure that due consideration, without which it can make no impression. Manner is, so to speak, the harbinger and herald of matter, summoning the faculties of the soul to give audience to the truth to be communicated, and holding the mind in a state of abstraction from all other subjects that would divert the thoughts and prevent impression. It is not only the more illiterate and feeble-minded, not only the multitude who are led by feeling more than by reason, that are influenced by good oratory, but also men of the sturdiest intellect, and of the most philosophic cast of mind. The soul of the sage as well as of the savage, is formed with a susceptibility to the power and influence of music, and therefore to the power and influence of elocution. The importance of manner is consequently great, yea, far greater than either tutors or preachers have been disposed to admit. It is true that

a good voice is necessary to good speaking, but not always to earnest speaking. Nature must do much to make a graceful and finished orator; but in the absence of this, a man of ardent mind, burning for the salvation of immortal souls, can, by an impressive earnestness of manner, be a more intense and effective speaker, notwithstanding naturally weak and unimpressive organs of speech, than the possessor of the finest voice, if destitute of life and feeling in his delivery; just as an exquisite performer can bring better music out of a bad instrument, than a bad musician can out of a good one. What may be done, for supplying deficiencies and correcting faults in elocution, where the mind is resolutely bent upon accomplishing this, Demosthenes has taught us; and were a tenth part of the pains taken by us to obtain a powerful and effective method of pulpit address which this prince of orators bestowed that he might become an effective speaker; did we exert the same determination to overcome every obstacle, we too should be orators in our better cause. And if ambition or patriotism, prompted Athenian and Roman orators to such studies and efforts for self-improvement, ought not love for souls, and zeal for God, to prompt us to similar endeavours? Did they cultivate elocution with such unwearied perseverance to counteract the designs of Philip, or to defeat or destroy Cataline; and shall we not use it to destroy the works of the devil, and to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer?

It is impossible not to observe how much the popularity of some preachers depends upon their manner; they do not say better or more striking things than other men; but they say them in a better and more

striking manner. There is passion in their tones, power in their looks, and gracefulness in their gestures, which other men have never studied, and therefore have never acquired. This was eminently the case with Whitfield, the greatest of preachers. Much of the wondrous power of that extraordinary man lay in his voice and action. I have already given an extract from his sermons to illustrate his manner as regards style of composition, but who that never heard him, or indeed who that had, could illustrate his manner of delivery? Think of such paragraphs as those just quoted, delivered with an utterance appropriate to their nature; with an eye melting into tears; a voice tremulous with emotion, shrill yet full, now swelling into thunder, and then dying away again in soft whispers; one moment apostrophising God, and the next piercing the sinner's conscience with an appeal that was as sharp arrows of the Almighty; at one time pouring out a stream of impassioned pity for the sinner, and the next moment a torrent of burning indignation against his sin; his very hands, and every gesture all the while seconding his matchless elocution and seeming to help his labouring soul; all this being not the trickery of an artificial rhetoric to catch applause, but only the expression of his burning desire to produce conviction in his hearers; not the acting of a man striving after popularity, but the spontaneous gushing forth of a heart agonizing for the salvation of immortal souls! What oratory must that have been which extorted from the sceptical and fastidious Hume the confession that it was worth going twenty miles to hear, which interested the infidel Bolingbroke, and warmed even the cold and cautious Franklin into enthusiasm? In those

discourses which roused a slumbering nation from the torpor of lukewarmness, and breathed new life into its dying piety, you will find no profound speculation, no subtle reasoning, no metaphysical disquisition; for these never formed, and never can form, the staple of pulpit eloquence: but you will find "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn;" and that when delivered with the magic of his wondrous voice, spoke, by the blessing of God, life into thousands dead in trespasses and sins. As a proof of the all-subduing power of his oratory, take the following scene from his Life by the Rev. Robert Philip.

"In February, 1742, Whitfield returned to London, where 'life and power soon flew all around him again; the Redeemer getting himself victory daily in many hearts.' The renewed progress of the gospel at this time in London, he calls emphatically, 'the Redeemer's stately steps.' Well he might; for during the Easter holidays, 'Satan's booth' in Moorfields poured out their thousands to hear him. This determined him to dare all hazards on Whit-Monday, the great gala-day of vanity and vice there. Gillies' account of this enterprise, although not incorrect nor uninteresting, is very incomplete, considering the fame of the feat at the time. The following account is from the pen of Whitfield himself.

"For many years, from one end of Moorfields to the other, booths of all kinds have been erected for mountebanks, players, puppet-shows, and such like. With a heart bleeding with compassion for so many thousands led captive by the devil at his will, on Whit-Monday, at six o'clock in the morning, attended by a large congregation of praying people, I ventured to lift up a standard amongst them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Perhaps there were about ten thousand in waiting, not for me, but for Satan's instruments to amuse them. Glad was I to find that I had, as it were for once, got the start of the devil. I mounted my field-pulpit; almost all flocked immediately around it. I preached on these words, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up,' etc. They gazed, they listened, they wept; and I believe that many felt themselves stung with deep conviction for their past sins. All was hushed and solemn. Being thus encouraged, I ventured out again at

noon; but what a scene! The fields, the whole fields, seemed in a bad sense of the word, all white, ready not for the Redeemer's but Beelzebub's harvest. All his agents were in full motion, drummers, trumpeters, merryandrews, masters of puppet-shows, exhibiters of wild beasts, players, etc., etc., all busy in entertaining their respective auditories. I suppose there could not be less than twenty or thirty thousand people. My pulpit was fixed on the opposite side, and immediately to their great mortification, they found the number of their attendants sadly lessened. Judging that like Saint Paul, I should now be called as it were to fight with beasts at Ephesus, I preached from these words: 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' You may easily guess that there was some noise among the craftsmen, and that I was honoured with having a few stones, dirt, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cats thrown at me, whilst engaged in calling them from their favourite but lying vanities. My soul was indeed among lions: but far the greatest part of my congregation, which was very large, seemed for awhile to be turned into lambs. This encouraged me to give notice that I would preach again at six o'clock in the evening. I came, I saw, but what? Thousands and thousands more than before, if possible, still more deeply engaged in their unhappy diversions; but some thousands amongst them waiting as earnestly to hear the gospel.

"This Satan could not brook. One of his choicest servants was exhibiting, trumpeting on a large stage; but as soon as the people saw me in my black robes and my pulpit, I think all to a man left him and ran to me. For a while I was enabled to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and many heard the joyful sound. God's people kept praying, and the enemy's agents made a kind of roaring at some distance from our camp. At length they approached nearer, and the merry-andrew (attended by others, who complained that they had taken many pounds less that day on account of my preaching,) got up upon a man's shoulders, and advancing near the pulpit attempted to slash me with a long heavy whip several times, but always with the violence of his motion tumbled down. Soon afterwards they got a recruiting sergeant with his drum, etc., to pass through the congregation. I gave the word of command, and ordered that way might be made for the king's officer. The ranks opened, while all marched quietly through, and then closed again. Finding these efforts to fail, a large body quite on the opposite side assembled together, and having got a large pole for their standard, advanced towards us with steady and formidable steps, till they came very near the skirts of our

hearing, praying, and almost undaunted congregation. I saw, gave warning, and prayed to the Captain of our salvation for present support and deliverance. He heard and answered; for just as they approached us with looks full of resentment, I know not by what accident, they quarrelled among themselves, threw down their staff, and went their way, leaving, however, many of their company behind, who before we had done, I trust were brought over to join the besieged party. I think I continued in praying, preaching, and singing, (for the noise was too great at times to preach) about three hours.

"We then retired to the Tabernacle, with my pockets full of notes from persons brought under concern, and read them amidst the praises and spiritual acclamations of thousands, who joined with the holy angels in rejoicing that so many sinners were snatched, in such an unexpected, unlikely place and manner, out of the very jaws of the devil. This was the beginning of the Tabernacle society. Three hundred and fifty awakened souls were received in one day, and I believe the number of notes exceeded a thousand; but I must have done, believing you want to retire to join in mutual praise and thanksgiving to God and the Lamb."

I venture to pronounce this the greatest achievement of elocution which the history of the world presents, next to the splendid triumph of the apostle Peter's sermon over the murderers of Christ on the day of Pentecost. Who that considers the spot on which Whitfield then stood; the scenes by which he was surrounded; the discordant noises of the motley crew, which rung in his ears, and the ears of his audience; who, in short, that recollects what the wild uproar and the hurly burly of a London popular fair is, must not stand astonished, first at the courage of the man who could erect his pulpit, and preach a sermon in such a scene; and then still more at the marvellous success of his effort in the conversion of hundreds of souls by that one discourse? What, I ask, was the effect on the Athenians of the orations of Demosthenes, in rousing them against Philip of Macedon, compared with this?

The illustrious Greek had on his side every advantage which the scenery, and the historic associations connected with it, and the prepared mind of his audience, could give to his splendid argument and declamation; but the Christian orator had to combat with, and to triumph over, every thing that seemed inharmonious with his theme, and opposed to the accomplishment of his object: and what must have been the magic power of that elocution which could blind the eyes of an audience to the sights, and deafen their ears to the sounds so near them, and produce such fixedness of attention, and such power of abstraction, as to leave them at liberty for those processes of thought, which resulted in the conversion of hundreds to God!*

And to what, in the way of instrumentality, shall we attribute this astonishing effect, but to the power of his wonderful oratory, combined with the simplicity and power of the truths he enforced? This fact has stood for a century upon record, and yet we have been slow to learn from it the lessons which it is adapted to teach, and among them, the effect produced by a commanding

* Since the publication of the former editions of this work, I have been favoured with the following testimony to the power of Whitfield's oratory by Dr. Dewar, Principal of Marischal College Aberdeen. "When a lad," said the late Dugald Stewart, "about eighteen years of age, I went to hear Whitfield preach on the Calton Hill. I listened to him with amazement. The fascination was such as I had never felt before. I had then, and I have since, formed in my mind the idea of the perfect orator: but it was never realized, except in the case of Whitfield. He came fully up to my ideal standard of a faultless and perfect orator." "Professor Dugald Stewart," writes Principal Dewar, "was between sixty and seventy years of age when he communicated to me this opinion regarding the matchless power of Whitfield. The testimony of a philosopher so distinguished is worthy of being recorded."

method of address, in circumstances apparently the most unlikely for such a result. I am not calling upon my brethren to imitate this daring attack upon the very citadel of Satan: even Whitfield never, I believe, repeated it, and perhaps ought never to have attempted it; but my object is to show the power of voice and action, and the nature of ministerial earnestness.

We shall now contemplate another instance of the power of oratory, which if it be less grand and commanding in itself, is perhaps more likely to be useful to the readers of this little work, because it is an instance brought nearer to their own times, and to the level of their own circumstances: I mean Mr Spencer, of Liverpool. In reference to this transcendent young preacher, Mr Hall remarks, "The writer of this deeply regrets his never having had an opportunity of witnessing his extraordinary powers: but from all he has heard from the best judges, he can entertain no doubt that his talents in the pulpit were unrivalled; and that had his life been spared, he would, in all probability, have carried the art of preaching to a greater perfection than it ever attained, at least in this kingdom. His eloquence appears to have been of the purest stamp, effective, not ostentatious; consisting less in the preponderance of any one quality requisite to form a public speaker, than in an exquisite combination of them all; whence resulted an extraordinary power of impression, which was greatly aided by a natural and majestic elocution." In this last expression Mr Hall has disclosed much of the secret of Mr Spencer's popularity and usefulness; "a natural and majestic elocution;" this setting forth with simple and unaffected earnestness of manner the grand doctrines of evan-

gelical truth, accompanied as it was with a most engaging countenance and form, constituted the charm, and led to the success, of this most captivating preacher of modern times. Let the young ministers of this age read his "Life and Remains," as published by his gifted successor, Dr. Raffles; and also his posthumous sermons, which have been since given to the world, and they will find nothing whatever of extraordinary genius; no lofty eloquence, in the usual acceptation of that term; no profound speculation; no splendid imagery or diction, but they will meet at every step with the doctrine of Christ crucified, set forth with manly vigour, in plain, perspicuous language; the utterances of a mind well instructed in the way of salvation, and of a heart overflowing with benevolence for the good of his fellow-creatures. To what then shall we attribute, under God, his success, not only in filling the large town in which he lived, and the nation at large, with his fame, but (what was infinitely more important in itself, and far more eagerly coveted by him,) in bringing so many souls to Christ? There is but one answer to be given to this, and that is, it was the fascination of his manner. He was in earnest. The stream of his simple, elegant, though by no means profound thought, flowed forth with a resistless impetuosity that carried away his hearers before it. There is scarcely any more instructive lesson to be learnt, or any more important inference to be drawn from the short life of this young minister, so mysteriously cut off at the very commencement of his career, than the vast consequence of an animated manner of preaching the gospel.

I may here advert to another individual, who was considered to be, in a particular way, one of the most

impressive preachers of his time, the late Mr Toller, of Kettering. He also no doubt owed much of the effect which his sermons produced, to his mode of address; and their effect proves that vehemence, boisterousness, and vociferation, are not essential to earnestness and deep impression; for nothing can be more calm and subdued, though nothing more solemnly commanding, than his whole demeanour in the pulpit. His printed sermons are characterised by strength of thought uttered in language of great perspicuity, though not irradiated by any coruscations of brilliant genius. "A noble simplicity and careless grandeur," says Mr Hall, with whom he lived on terms of most intimate friendship, "were the distinguishing features of his eloquence." There was an irresistible charm in his manner which threw a spell over all his hearers, and fascinated alike the learned and the illiterate; he made the latter to understand, and the former to feel. I never heard him but once, but it was on a memorable occasion, the ordination of Mr Robertson of Stretton, at which Mr Hall delivered the admirable charge afterwards published under the title of "The Difficulties and Encouragements of the Christian Minister." It is impossible ever to forget, and equally so to describe, the effect produced by two such preachers on such an occasion: it was the first time I ever heard either of them, and the last that I ever heard Mr Toller, and it almost seemed as if I had never heard preaching before: both were excited no doubt, and stimulated to do their best, not only by the occasion, but by the presence of each other. The terms employed by Mr. Toller's biographer were the most appropriate that could be selected to describe his style and manner, "simplicity and

careless grandeur." It was impossible not to listen; neither eye nor ear played truant for a moment while he was preaching; his delivery was not the rushing torrent of impassioned eloquence which gushed afterwards from the lips of his distinguished fellow-labourer, but the majestic, silent flow of a noble river. "In the power of awakening pathetic emotions," says Mr Hall in his Memoir, "he has excelled any preacher it has been my lot to hear. Often have I seen a whole congregation melted under him like wax before the sun: my own feelings on more than one occasion have approached to an overpowering agitation. The effect was produced apparently with perfect ease. No elaborate preparation, no peculiar vehemence or intensity of tones, no artful accumulation of pathetic images, led the way: the mind was captivated and subdued, it hardly knew how. Though it will not be imagined that this triumph of popular eloquence could be habitual, much less constant, it may be safely affirmed that a large proportion of Mr Toller's discourses afforded some indications of these powers." The following is Mr Hall's description of the effect of two sermons preached in his hearing by this eminent man.

"It was about this period (1796) that my acquaintance with him commenced. I had known him previously, and occasionally heard him; but it was at a season when I was not qualified to form a correct estimate of his talents. At the time referred to, we were engaged to preach a double lecture at Thrapstone, nine miles from Kettering; and never shall I forget the surprise and pleasure with which I listened to an expository discourse, from 1 Peter ii, 1, 3. The richness, the unction, the simple majesty which pervaded his address, produced a sensation which I never felt before: it gave me a new view of the Christian ministry. But the effect, powerful as it was, was not to be compared with that which I experienced on hearing him preach at the half-yearly meeting of the Association, at Bedford.

The text which he selected was peculiarly solemn and impressive: his discourse was founded on 2 Peter i, 13-15, 'Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle,' etc. The effect of this discourse on the audience was such as I have never witnessed before or since. It was undoubtedly very much aided by the peculiar circumstances of the speaker, who was judged to be far advanced in a decline, and who seemed to speak under the impression of its being the last time he should address his brethren on such an occasion. The aspect of the preacher, pale, emaciated, standing apparently on the verge of eternity, the simplicity and majesty of his sentiments, the sepulchral solemnity of a voice which seemed to issue from the shades, combined with the intrinsic dignity of the subject, perfectly quelled the audience with tenderness and terror, and produced such a scene of audible weeping as was perhaps never surpassed. All other emotions were absorbed in devotional feeling: it seemed to us as though we were permitted for a short space to look into eternity, and every sublunary object vanished before 'the powers of the world to come.' Yet there was no considerable exertion, no vehemence, no splendid imagery, no magnificent description; it was the simple declaration of truth, of truth indeed of infinite moment, borne in upon the heart by a mind intensely alive to its reality and grandeur. Criticism was disarmed; the hearer felt himself elevated to a region which it could not penetrate; all was powerless submission to the master-spirit of the scene. It will be always considered by those who witnessed it as affording as high a specimen as can be easily conceived, of the power of a preacher over his audience, the habitual or even frequent recurrence of which would create an epoch in the religious history of the world." Memoir of Mr. Toller.

This description, even though some allowance should be made for the eloquence of friendship, is replete with instruction to our rising ministers. They may learn the vast importance of the manner in which a sermon is delivered, as well as the matter of which it is composed. Nor is this the only lesson, nor perhaps the most valuable one, to be learnt from this short but precious piece of ministerialbiography; for we gather what it is that, to minds of the highest order, such as Mr. Hall's, con-

stitutes the nearest approach to perfect pulpit eloquence, and to which even such commanding intellects yield themselves up with willing submission; not the artificial elaboration of men intent upon producing a great sermon; not the magniloquent diction and splendid imagery sought with ambitious eagerness by those who aim to shine; not the cold, abstract, philosophical reasoning of a metaphysical dialectician, but the simplicity and earnestness which aim to instruct the judgment, to awaken the conscience, and to affect the heart. All great minds love simplicity and detest affectation. This was especially the case with Mr. Hall. His censure of the mental quality most opposed to earnestness amounted sometimes to eloquent extravagance and burlesque, and his sarcasms were not unfrequently tinged with uncharitable bitterness; as his admiration of simplicity was occasionally expressed in somewhat exaggerated panegyric. The ambition of a preacher whose aim is usefulness might well be gratified by a remark which he once made after hearing a sermon, "I should not wonder if a hundred souls were converted to night?" *

These are only a few out of innumerable instances which could be adduced to prove the vast importance which attaches to an effective delivery. Far greater numbers of our preachers fail for want of this, than from any other cause; and the fact is so notorious as to need no proof beyond common observation, and so impressive as to demand the attention, not only of the professors, but the committees, of all our colleges. It is too generally the case that adequate culture is not bestowed

* The editor may be permitted to notice that this sermon was by the author; as some who would be glad to know what preacher was alluded to, might not gather this from the text.

upon the speaking powers of our students, from the beginning to the end of their course of study. There is great assiduity manifested in securing them fulness of matter, but far too little in giving them impressiveness of manner. Assistance is granted to make them scholars, philosophers, and divines; but as to becoming good speakers, they are, I fear, left pretty much to themselves. Nay, it is not even inculcated upon them, with the emphasis it should be, to try to make themselves such. A complete system of ministerial education naturally includes great attention to elocution; and this should commence as soon as a student enters college, so that by the time he is put upon the preaching list, he may have some aptitude for the management of his voice, and not have his thoughts diverted then from his matter and his object, to his manner. He should by that time have acquired the habit of speaking well, so as to be able to practise it with facility, and without study. The great objection to lectures on elocution is, that they are apt to produce a pompous, stiff, and affected manner; but this is an abuse of the art; its object should be to cure the vices of a bad, and to supply the wants of a defective enunciation, and to form an easy, natural, and impressive delivery. When will preachers learn that preaching is but talking in a louder tone, and with a little more emphasis of manner? Why affect a preaching or a praying tone, a method of speaking peculiar to the pulpit? A conversational manner, occasionally elevated animated and energetic, as impassioned passages and feeling may require, is what we want. There are some men who are good talkers out of the pulpit, yet bad speakers in it. How much more acceptable would

they be, if they would carry their easy, natural manner of conversation with them into the sacred desk!

I entirely concur therefore with Dr. Vaughan, in his important and impressive remark, "that let our students fail in the matter of a good elocution, and so far as regards their ministry among Protestant Dissenters, it will matter little in what else they may succeed." This is sustained by a reference to the great number we observe, who, though soundly orthodox in sentiment, possessed of large acquirements in scholarship and philosophy, partaking of undoubted piety, and desirous of doing good, yet make no way, can with difficulty procure a charge, and are filled perhaps with wonder, that men very much their inferiors in natural talent and literary acquirement, are every where followed, while they are every where neglected. The problem is easily solved, the mystery soon explained; these inferior men, by their earnest, animated manner, make their more slender abilities tell more upon the popular mind, heart, and conscience, than do the heartless dissertations and elaborate essays of dull scholars, frigid philosophers, and bad speakers, though possessed of useless stores of knowledge.

It should, however, be remarked, that there is nothing more likely to be mistaken than animation in the pulpit. There are many young ministers, who, being aware of the importance of a graceful and effective elocution, take no small pains to acquire it, by studying and practising the most approved rules of the art. But it is not this alone for which we contend; for as the lessons of the dancing master produce only stiff and formal action, where there is no natural ease and elegance, so the

teacher of elocution can do little to form an earnest and energetic speaker, where there is no living source of animation in the soul. It is not a pompous, swelling, ore rotundo style of speaking that constitutes the excellence of an orator; not "the start and stare theatric;" not modulations of the voice that sound as if the speaker were regulating tones and cadences by the fugleman motions of a teacher standing before him; but the impassioned vivacity of one who feels intensely his subject, and speaks under the influence of strong emotion, as one determined to make others feel. The secret of animation, and the source of earnestness, lie, as I have said, in an intense feeling of the subject of discourse; in a mind deeply impressed, and a heart warmed, with the theme discussed. All men are in earnest when they feel. Hence the anecdote of the pleader, who was so disgusted with a client's cold manner of stating her case, as to tell her that he did not credit her tale. Stung by this reflection upon her veracity, and this disbelief of her grievance, she rose into strong emotion, and affirmed with expressive vehemence the truth of the story. "Now," said he, "I believe you."

The hacknied but valuable precept of the old poet remains, and ever will remain, as true as when first uttered, "Weep yourself, if you wish me to weep." Sympathy is the speaker's most powerful auxiliary: there is nothing so contagious as strong emotion. We have most of us, perhaps, seen a large portion of a congregation brought to tears by the pathetic and faltering tones, the tremulous lips, and suffused eyes of the preacher. But then it must be sincere, and not simulated emotion, must be excited by a subject worthy of it, and must be shewn when the people's minds are prepared to sympathise with it. It

is well said there is only a step between the sublime and the ridiculous; and the same remark may be applied to the pathetic, it may degenerate into mere puking. Genuine emotion is the charm of all speaking upon moral and religious subjects, and in the absence of it, the most measured and stately elocution, whatever pleasure it may impart to the ear, will have little power to affect the heart. We have sometimes listened to lofty and well composed music, to an overture for instance, which we could not but admire; but it was still cold admiration, for the whole piece had not a note of passion from beginning to end; but some simple melody followed it, which by the pathos of its notes or the power of its associations touched every chord in our hearts, and raised in us a tumult of emotion. Thus it is with different preachers, we listen to one, whose excellent composition, and sonorous, perhaps even musical voice, command our admiration; but not a passion stirs, all within is cold, quiet, and without emotion, his speaking is good, but it does not move us: while another has perhaps less talent, indeed less oratory in one sense, but has tones, looks, and manner all full of earnest feeling, and every word of his coming from his heart, awakens by sympathy a correspondent state of feeling in our hearts. Who is likely to be moved by hearing a man discuss the most awful realities of eternal truth, such as the danger and doom of impenitent sinners, the glories of heaven, and the torments of hell, with as much coolness, and with as little emotion as a lecturer on science would exhibit when dwelling on the facts of natural history? Is it probable there can be any earnestness in the hearers, when there is none in the preacher? "How is

it," said a minister to an actor, "that your performances, which are but pictures of the imagination, produce so much more effect than our sermons, which are all realities?" "Because," said the actor, "we represent fictions as though they were realities, and you preach realities as though they were fictions." It is difficult to believe that a dull, cold, statue-like preacher, whose passionless monotony is a mental opiate for his hearers, can himself credit the message he is delivering. What, that man who never elevates or depresses his voice from one given pitch of soporific dulness, whose tone never falters, whose eye never glistens, whose hand never moves, who speaks as if he was afraid of awakening the slumberers whom his "drowsy tinklings" have lulled to sleep, he feel the weight of souls; he in earnest for their salvation; he endeavouring to pluck them as brands from the burning! Who will credit it? It is true he may have no great compass of voice, and a naturally phlegmatic mind, with great deficiency in the natural powers of oratory; but place him by the side of a river where he has seen a fellow-creature fall into the water, and let him throw a plank or a rope to aid the drowning man to escape, will he not have power of voice, and of animated tones, and of persuasive earnestness then, as he directs the object of his solicitude to the means of deliverance? Will he not rise out of his monotony there? Will he not make himself heard and felt there?

By an earnest manner, then, is meant, the method of delivery produced by a deep and feeling sense of the importance of our message. We are to persuade, to entreat, to beseech; and these modes of speech have an utterance of their own. What must Paul's manner

have been, how impassioned and impressive, when he made Felix tremble, and Festus exclaim, "Thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad!" But even the sublime and awful truths of revelation, if they do not press upon the heart of the preacher, and command and possess it, will be but coldly handled and feebly discussed. It is only when the love of Christ constrains us, and bears us away as with the force of a torrent, that we shall speak with a manner befitting our great theme. If we are not intensely real, we shall be but indifferent preachers.

This shows us the vast moment of our living under the powerful impression of the truths we preach. We cannot, like the actor, have a stage dress and character to put on for the occasion, and to put off when the curtain drops. There may indeed be a factitious earnestness excited by the sound of our own voice, and by the solemnities of public worship; but this will usually be fitful, feeble, assumed, and very different from that burning ardour which is the result of eminent piety, and which imparts its own intensity of emotion to the words and tones of the speaker. It was the patriotism of Demosthenes that communicated the fire to his eloquence: he loved his country, and trembling for the ruin that Philip was bringing upon the liberties of Greece, he poured forth his lightning-words in tones of thunder. His philippics were a torrent of the strongest emotion, bursting from his heart, though guided in its course by the established rules of eloquence. He could never have spoken as he did, had not the designs of the Macedonian and the dangers of Greece, wrung his soul with anguish. So must it be with us, our animation must be the earnestness,

not of rhetoric, but of religion: not of art, but of renewed nature; and designed not to astound, but to convince and move; a manner studied and intended not to attract a crowd, and to excite applause, but to save the souls of men from death. For this purpose whatever means we employ and whatever rules we lay down, to cure the vices of a bad elocution, and to acquire the advantages of a graceful one, (and such an aim is quite lawful,) we must ever remember that the basis of a powerful and effective pulpit oratory will be deep and fervent piety; and in the absence of that, the most commanding gift of public speaking will be but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Dr. Cotton Mather, in his invaluable work, now nearly forgotten, entitled, "The Student and Preacher," in speaking on this subject, remarks:

"It is a pity but a well prepared sermon should be a well pronounced one. Wherefore avoid for ever all inanes sine mente sonos, and all indecencies; everything that is ridiculous. Be sure to speak deliberately. Strike the accent always upon the word in the sentence it properly belongs unto. A tone that shall have no regard to this is very injudicious, and will make you talk too much in the clouds. Do not begin too high. Ever conclude with vigour. If you must have your notes before you in your preaching, and it be needful for you, De scripto dicere, which even some of the most famous orators, both among the Grecians and the Romans, did; yet let there be with you a distinction between the neat using of notes, and the dull reading of them. Keep up the air and life of speaking, and put not off your hearers with a heavy reading to them. How can you demand of them to remember much of what you bring to them, when you remember nothing of it yourself? Besides by reading all you say, you will so cramp and stunt all ability for speaking, that you will be unable to make a handsome speech on any occasion. What I therefore advise you to is, let your notes be little more than a guide, on which you may cast your eye now and then, to see what arrow is to be next fetched from thence; and then with your eye as much as may be on them whom you speak to, let it be shot away with a vivacity

becoming one in earnest for to have the truths well entertained by the auditory. Finally let your perorations be lively expostulations with the conscience of the hearer; appeals made and questions put unto the conscience, and consignments of the work over into the hands of that flaming preacher in the bosom of the hearer. In such flames you may do wondrously."

Pity that Dr. Mather had not gone a little farther than this, and affectionately advised his younger brethren in the ministry to begin their career without any notes at all in the pulpit; advice still more necessary in this day, as there seems a rising inclination to adopt the practice of reading. Nothing can be conceived of more likely to repress earnestness, and to hinder our usefulness, than this method becoming general. True it is that some preachers may rise up, who, like a few living examples, may, in despite of this practice, attain to eminence, honour, and usefulness, such as rarely fall to the lot of ministers in any denomination; but this will not be the case with the greater number, who not having commanding intellect to lift them above the disadvantage of this habit, will find few churches willing to accept their dulness, for the sake of the accuracy with which it is expressed. And who can tell us how much greater our greatest men would be, if they delivered their sermons without their notes? Think of Whitfield, Hall, Parsons, reading their sermons. What a restraint upon their noble intellects and their gushing hearts! Where is reading tolerated but in the pulpit? Not on the stage, nor at the bar, nor in the senate. It is conceded that we lose something of precision and accuracy by spoken discourses, as compared with those that are read, but is not this more than made up by what we gain in ease and impression? The aid borrowed from the expressions of the countenance

and graceful action is lost by him who slavishly reads; the link of sympathy between his soul and those of his audience is weakened; the lightnings of his eloquence flash less vividly, and its thunders roll less grandly through this obstruction. Perhaps even those who do read are aware of the disadvantages of the habit, and would say to their younger brethren, whose habits are not yet formed, avoid if you can, the practice of reading your discourses. There are however occasions, when from the nature and extent of the subject, this practice is not only allowable, but necessary.

In connexion with the subject of preaching, I may consider, with propriety, the matter and manner of prayer. There is a close and obvious connexion between the two, for earnest sermons should ever be associated with earnest prayers; and it cannot be doubted that a pious, faithful, and devoted minister is scarcely less useful, at any rate in keeping up the spirit of devotion in his congregation, by the latter, than by the former. His chastened fervour, like a breeze from heaven, comes over the languid souls of his hearers, and fans the spark of piety in their hearts to a flame: while on the contrary, the dulness and coldness of some public prayers are enough to freeze what little devotion there may be in the assembled people. We have thought too little of this, and have too much neglected to cultivate the gift, and to seek the grace, of supplication. If entreating and beseeching importunity be proper in dealing with sinners for God, can it be less so in dealing with God for sinners? Our flocks should be the witnesses of both these acts on our part, and hear not only how we speak to them, but how we plead with God for them; they should be the auditors of our

agonizing intercession on their behalf; and be convinced how true is our declaration that we have them in our hearts. How such petitions, so full of intense affection and deep solicitude, would tend to soften their minds, and to prepare them for the sermon which was to follow! Who has not beheld the solemnizing and subduing effect upon a congregation of such holy wrestling with God? The audience seemed to feel as if God had indeed come down among them in power and glory during the prayer, and was preparing to do some work of grace in their midst. The rudest and most turbulent spirits have sometimes been awed, and the most trifling and frivolous minds made serious, by this holy exercise. We who practise extempore prayer have advantages in this respect, of which we should not be slow to avail ourselves. Not being confined by the forms of a liturgy, but left to our own choice, we can give harmony to all the various parts of the service, and make the scripture we read, and the hymns we sing, as well as the prayers we present, all bear upon the subject of the sermon, and thus give unity of design, and concentration of effect, to the solemn engagements of the sanctuary. This should be an object with every minister, in order that the thoughts of the people may flow pretty much in one channel, and towards one point, without being divided or diverted. Moral, as well as mechanical effect depends upon the combination of many seemingly small causes. But more especially should the prayers be in harmony with the sermon, and every preacher knows what the sermon is to be. If he is about to address himself in a strain of beseeching importunity to the impenitent and unbelieving, how much would it tend to prepare them for his appeal, if

his heart were previously, in their hearing, to pour forth a strain of fervent pleading with God on their behalf. They would thus be awed and subdued into a state of mind likely to render the forthcoming sermon effectual, by the blessing of God, for their conversion. Such a prayer would be the most appropriate introduction he could give to his discourse. But then especial care should be taken that the hymn, and even the tune, interposed between the prayer and the sermon, should not be of a kind to divert the current of thought, much less to efface the solemn impressions already produced, and hinder the effect of the discourse about to be delivered. I remember to have heard a preacher, who was going to preach a very solemn sermon, breathe out one of the most impressive strains of intercession for the impenitent I ever listened to, as if anxious to begin by his prayer the work of conversion, which he hoped to finish by his sermon. The people sat down in solemn awe, when as if by the prompting of the wicked One, who catches away the seed of the word out of the heart, the clerk gave out a most inappropriate hymn, and the choir* with a band of musical instruments, sang a tune more inappropriate still. As may be easily imagined, the seriousness produced by the preacher was instantly dissipated, and the preparation for the sermon entirely destroyed. How true is it, that the singing-seat is often hostile to the usefulness of the pulpit, and the

* Perhaps, after all the attempts to improve our congregational singing by organs and choirs, there is nothing more devotional and effective than the plan of a thoroughly good precentor, as he is called in Scotland, or clerk in England, especially if the congregation be trained as well as exhorted to join in this sublime part of worship. This would shut out the evils which not unfrequently occur where there is a choir.

choir in opposition to the efforts of the preacher! Finney, in his book on Revivals, descends to so minute a specification of the circumstances to be attended to in preparing for a revival, as to expose him to the ridicule of many of his readers, and no attempt is made here to defend him, or to recommend his volume; but still there is true philosophy in the spirit of his directions, which amounts to this; that the effect of sermons, as indeed of all public speaking, depends often upon very little things. Trifles have great power to divert the current of thought, to break the chain of reflection, and to disturb the process of emotion. Every thing connected with public worship should be still, orderly, and solemn, as befits a service conducted in the presence of God, and with reference to him.

Returning to the subject of prayer, it becomes every minister to take especial care that this shall be conducted with propriety, not only on account of its nature and design, as addressed to God, and as the medium of obtaining blessings at his hand, but because of its moral effect upon the people. We object to precomposed forms, (and we think on sufficient grounds,) as wanting in adaptation to the ever changing circumstances of the congregation, to the events of the time, and to the services of the minister, and as tending to produce formalism; but we are bound to take care that all these benefits are secured by our free prayers, and that they are in every respect adapted to edification. But is there not room for much improvement in our public devotional exercises? In some cases there is too much elaboration and appearance of study; though in far more, a want of richness and and fulness of unction and importunity. The prayers are often too excursive and

vague, a mere string of petitions which have no connexion with each other, and are without unity of design, or definiteness of object. There are some admirable remarks on the subject of extempore prayer in Foster's sketch of Mr Hall's character as a preacher, which go to prove that more concentration of thought on particular topics would produce a greater effect than that unrestrained discursiveness which characterizes too many of our devotional exercises. We pass too rapidly from one subject to another, and thus as it were surprise our hearers, by their being brought to a new topic, before they are aware that they had left the preceding one; and it may be safely affirmed that it is very difficult to join in prayers which do not detain the thoughts on certain things for a few moments. "Things noted so transiently do not admit of deliberate attention, and seem as if they did not claim it." With the liberty of unrestricted variety which we possess, why should it be thought necessary to go always over the same ground, and to bring in the same topics, in the same exact order, in much the same length, and in almost the same words? Why may we not sometimes drop every thing else, and break out into a continued strain in reference to one continued object? How deeply the audience would be convinced of the importance which we at any rate feel to belong to it, and how likely would such a method be to engage them in deep sympathy with us, in reference to it! We should also be careful to avoid all personalities which would excite curiosity or disturb devotion, and especially all laudatory epithets on the one hand, and criminatory ones on the other. In using our freedom, let us take care not to abuse it, and endeavour that the end and object of

our preaching may be helped, and not hindered, by the method of our praying. If pre-composed forms of prayer have their disadvantages, so also has free prayer; and while we consider the balance of advantage vastly in favour of the latter, let us recollect that our brethren of the Establishment are of the same opinion respecting their liturgy; it becomes us therefore while we charitably bear with each other, each to make the best possible use of the method we prefer.

The manner of prayer, as well as its matter, demands also our serious attention. While the very nature of the exercise forbids every thing showy or elaborately ingenious; every thing quaint, familiar, and irreverent, and enjoins the utmost simplicity and spirituality, it no less prohibits all flippancy, carelessness, and pompous oratory. The most serious, reverent, and devotional manner is required, not only on our own account, but on account of the audience. There are some men whose very tones are enough to extinguish all devotional feeling at once, and render it almost impossible to conceive that we hear a sinful mortal addressing himself to the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God, before whom the seraphim veil their faces. While on the contrary there are others whose deeply devotional air, subdued manner, and awe-stricken demeanour, remind us that they are indeed speaking to the Almighty. It is not necessary to suppose that earnestness requires boisterousness; a mistake too commonly made by many who work themselves up into vociferation and contortion of features. Such vehemence, like a violent blast of wind, puts out the flame of devotion if languid, when a gentler breeze would fan it to intensity. It is well also to avoid that sing-song tone which we too often

hear in those who lead the public devotions. But above all there must be earnestness; the earnestness of deep feeling, of lively devotion, of a heart intent upon its own salvation, and upon the salvation of those who are then waiting to hear the word of life.

Our pleading, though in the highest degree reverential, should be that of men who are standing between the living and the dead, subdued and chastened, yet importunate intercession, such as it might be supposed we should use in addressing an earthly monarch, when interceding for the lives of some for whom we were anxious to obtain the interposition of royal mercy.

CHAPTER VII.

EARNESTNESS MANIFESTED IN THE PASTORATE.

This must by no means be omitted. The pulpit is the chief, but not the only, sphere of ministerial solicitude and action: just as preaching is God's first, but not his exclusive, means of saving souls. Many ministers have fallen into one or other of two opposite mistakes; one class have thought to do every thing in the pulpit as preachers, while they have neglected the duties of the pastor; the others have purposed to do every thing as pastors, but have neglected the diligent preparation of their sermons. Of the two errors the latter is the more mischievous, inasmuch as no pastoral devotedness, however intense, will long keep together a congregation among Protestant Dissenters, much less collect one, when the preaching is indifferent and unattractive; while on the other hand, good preaching will of itself do much even in the absence of pastoral attentions to keep the flock from being scattered. But why should not both extremes be avoided? Good preaching and good shepherding are quite compatible with each other, and he who is in earnest will combine both. He will be a watchman for souls every where, and seek if by any and by all means he can save some. He can never entirely lay aside his anxiety for the objects of his regard, and is ever ready to manifest it on all suitable occasions.

His sermons are composed and delivered for this object, and he is afterwards inquisitive for the effect they have produced, and watches and prays for the result. His anxious eye is searching the congregation, even while preaching, to see, not who is delighted, but who is seriously impressed. He will not, cannot, be content to go on, without ascertaining whether or not his sermons are successful. Like a good physician, who is watchful for the effect of his medicines upon his patients individually, according to their specific varieties of disease, he will endeavour to ascertain the impression which his sermons have produced on particular persons. He will aim to attract to him the anxious inquirers after salvation, and for this purpose will have special meetings for them, will invite and encourage their attendance, will cause them to feel that they are most welcome, and by his tender, faithful, and appropriate treatment of their cases, will make them sensible that they are as truly the objects of deep interest to him as lambs are to the good shepherd. And though he will very naturally wish not to be too frequently broken in upon in his private studies by those to whom he has appointed set times for meeting him, yet a poor burdened trembling penitent will never find him engaged too deeply or delightfully in study, to heal his broken heart, and to bind up his wounds. It is really distressing to know how little time some ministers are willing to give up from their favourite pursuits, even for relieving the solicitudes of an anxious mind. They read much, and perhaps as the result, preach well-composed, though possibly not very awakening, sermons; but as for any skill, or even taste, for dealing with convinced sinners, wounded consciences, and perplexed

minds, they are as destitute of them as if they were no part of their duty. They resemble lecturers on medicine, rather than practitioners; or they are like physicians who would assemble all their patients able to attend, in the same room, and then give general directions about health and sickness to all alike, but would not inquire into their several ailments, or visit them at their own abodes, or adapt the treatment to their individual and specific disease. It is admitted that some men have less tact, and a still greater destitution of taste, than others, for this department of pastoral action; but some skill in it, and some attention to it, are the duty of every minister, and may be acquired by all: and no man can be in earnest without it. He who can only generalise in the pulpit, but has no ability to individualise out of it; who cannot in some measure meet the varieties of religious perplexity, and deal with the various modifications of awakened solicitude; who finds himself disinclined or disabled to guide the troubled conscience through the labyrinths which sometimes meet the sinner in the first stage of his pilgrimage to the skies, may be a popular preacher, but he is little fitted to be the pastor of a Christian church. One half-hour's conversation with a convinced but perplexed person may do more to correct mistakes, to convey instruction, to relieve solicitude, and to settle the wavering in faith and peace than ten sermons. True it requires much love for souls, much devotedness to their salvation, and much anxiety for the success of our ministry, to devote that half-hour to one solitary inquirer after life eternal; but surely no really earnest minister will think his time ill bestowed in guiding that single inquirer into the way of peace.

This individualising labour is more easily carried on and is indeed more important to ministerial success in some situations than in others. In small congregations, for instance, especially when they are found in our lesser towns or villages, the objects of such special attention come more under the notice of a pastor, are more accessible, and can have more time given to them, than in large congregations in more considerable towns. To these smaller churches, individuals, though not of more importance or value in themselves, since the soul and its salvation are of equal worth every where, are of more consequence to the comfort of the minister, and the prosperity of the cause, than they are where a crowd is gathered. Pastors of large churches are much more occupied, both with the concerns of their own flock, and with public business, than their brethren in more retired situations, and are often so much engaged and hurried as to have too little leisure for the individual attentions now recommended; and they are perhaps apt, through having to do with large congregations, to think too little of the units. Still some excuse may be made for them, of which others cannot avail themselves. The accession even occasionally of only a single member to our smaller churches is felt to be of more importance, and produces a more reviving and cheering effect, than the addition of several to the larger ones. We have all something to learn even from the Scribes and Pharisees of ancient times, who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte; and also from the Papists of modern times, who pursue a like course: or to change the example, we want more of the benevolent disposition of angels, who rejoice over one sinner that repents. No efforts

would be more likely to be successful, none would more amply reward those who would make them, than selection of the most hopeful individuals in the congregation, and following them up with all the assiduities of special, affectionate, and judicious attention. Such a course of pastoral labour, though it would not altogether be a substitute for pulpit attractiveness, and should never be allowed to supersede the most diligent pulpit preparation, would enable many a minister, not gifted with large abilities, to retain a strong hold upon his flock. This is a line in which almost any one may carry on a career of earnestness.

Another object of pastoral obligation may be mentioned, attention to the young: and they may be divided into two classes, those belonging to the congregation, and those belonging to the Sunday-schools. With regard to the former, it is a matter of congratulation, that the modern plan of Bible-classes is not infrequent nor unsuccessful: but even at this time, it is rather the exception than the rule. It may be feared that there are some who from the beginning to the end of the year, aye, and of their ministry also, take no interest in the youth of their congregations; they have no catechetical classes, no Bible-classes, and even rarely preach to the young. Who can wonder that such men have to complain that their young people go off to other denominations, or what is far worse, to the world? What have they ever done to attach them to themselves, or to their place of worship? Let no man be surprised that his congregation, diminished by death and removals, continually declines, if he neglects to call around him the youth of his flock. Whence does the shepherd look for his future flock, but from the lambs? And who are

to constitute our future congregations and churches, but our young people!

I am an advocate also for the catechetical instruction of the younger children, and am sorry that this admirable method of imparting religious truth has fallen into such general desuetude. Even the Bible class, however accommodated to the capacity of the junior members of our congregation, is not altogether a substitute for the practice of catechising, but should be regarded only as an addition to it. There is still a great desideratum for our denomination, and their thanks would be pre-eminently due to the man who should supply it; I mean a set of well-composed catechisms, which might be introduced into all our families and institute a uniform system of religious instruction throughout the body. I say which might be introduced into all our families; for it is by no means my wish or my intention to obtrude the pastor between the parent and child, and take the religious instruction from natural guardians and teachers, to devolve it upon the pastor. It is to parents that the injunction is delivered, "thou shalt teach these words to thy children diligently, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house," and, "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." No pastoral attention should be intended, nor can be adapted, to supersede or interfere with this solemn parental obligation. But the pastor should labour to the uttermost to urge and keep the parents of his flock up to the right discharge of their duty. There are few of us who are not sorrowfully convinced that little is to be expected from our sermons in the pulpit, or our instructions in the class-room, while all our endeavours

are so miserably counteracted by the neglect of domestic instruction, and the want of parental solicitude. It is not intended to justify pastoral neglect by advancing the obligations of parental duty, for perhaps we all have been, and are, guilty of a criminal defect of duty, in not giving more of our time and attention to the children of our congregations; but even the time and attention we do give, is likely to be lost, through the low state of religion in the homes of some of our people.

We might very naturally expect that our churches would be chiefly built up from the families of our members; whereas the greater number of accessions are from those who were once the people of the world. There is a great mistake on this subject, into which both parents and ministers have fallen; and that is, that the conversion of the children of the professor is to be looked for more from the sermons of the minister, than from the instructions of the parent; whereas the contrary is the true order of things; and if domestic piety and teaching were what they ought to be, it is the order which would be found to exist. There is unquestionable truth in the proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Were the nature and design of the domestic constitution thoroughly understood, and its religious duties early, judiciously, affectionately, and perseveringly discharged, the greater number of our young people would be converted to God at home. Were all religious professors who are parents, real and eminent Christians; were they, from the time they became parents, to set their hearts upon being the instruments of their children's conversion; were they to do all that prayer, instruction, discipline, and example could do, for the

formation of the religious character of their offspring; and were they carefully to abstain from every thing which would obstruct that end, it might be confidently expected that it would be within the hallowed precincts of such homes, and not in the sanctuary, that the children of the godly would usually become godly themselves. It should then be, and will be, an object with every truly earnest pastor, to bring up the parents in his church to a right sense and faithful discharge of their functions. He will labour to impress upon them the solemn obligations under which they live, to train up their children for God. It will be a matter of prayer and solicitude with him to excite them to their duty, and to keep them in it. For this purpose he will not only bring his pulpit ministrations to bear much upon parental obligations, but he will make a point of visiting the families connected with his church, to pray with them, and to hold up the hands of the parents in this godly duty. Deeply is it to be regretted that this part of pastoral occupation, as well as catechising, has disappeared amidst the bustle and engrossing power of trade, and the public business of modern religious institutions. How little do the families of our people know of us in the character and hallowed familiarity of the pastor! When are we seen amidst the domestic circle as the respected and beloved minister of that lovely and interesting group, labouring, by our affectionate, serious, and solemn discourse, and by prayer as serious, solemn, and affectionate, to entwine ourselves round the young hearts which there look up to us with reverent regard? Why, why do we neglect such important scenes of labour, such hopeful efforts for usefulness? What power would this give to our

sermons, and what efficacy to our ministrations! These young ones would grow up to love us, and it would not be a light or little thing which would break them off from our ministry when we had produced in them such a personal attachment to ourselves. But then we must take especial care that our conduct in the houses of our people should be such as to give weight and influence to their religious instruction of the family, and to ours in the sanctuary. We must be known there as the servants of God, the ministers of Christ, the watchmen for souls; and not merely as the table-guests, the parlour jesters, the gossiping story-tellers, the debating politicians, the stormy polemics, the bitter sectarians; much less as the lovers of wine.* Would to God that

* When will the ministers and members of our churches begin generally to inquire, whether it is not expedient for them, if not for their own sakes, yet for the sake of the community, to discontinue altogether the use of intoxicating liquors! When it is considered that one-half of the insanity, two-thirds of the abject poverty, and three-fourths of the crime, of our country, are to be traced up to drunkenness; that more than £60,000,000 are annually expended in destructive beverages; that myriads annually die the drunkard's death and descend still lower than the drunkard's grave; that thousands of church members are every year cut off from Christian fellowship for inebriety; that every minister of the gospel has to complain of the hindrance to his usefulness from this cause; and that more ministers are disgraced by this than by any other habit; that, in short, more misery and more crime flow over society from this source than from any other, war and slavery not excepted; and that by the highest medical authorities these intoxicating drinks are reduced, as diet from the rank of necessaries to luxuries; it surely does become every professor of religion to ask whether it is not incumbent upon him, both for his own safety and for the good of his fellow creatures, to abstain from this pernicious indulgence. On the authority of Mr Sheriff Alison, it is stated that in the year 1840, there were in Glasgow of about 30,000 inhabited houses no fewer than 3010 appropriated to the sale of intoxicating drinks. The same gen-

those of my brethren who have acquired the habit of smoking, if they will not leave it off, would abstain from the practice in the houses of their friends, and confine it to their own: and not permit the inquisitive eyes of the junior members of the families which they visit, to see the pipe brought out as their necessary adjunct. Did they know the regrets of their best friends, and consider the power of their example, they would, at any rate, so far abstain as to wait till they had reached their own habitation, before they indulged themselves in their accustomed gratification. Still, it is freely conceded, without justifying this habit, there are some who are addicted to it, so grave serious and dignified in other respects, as to furnish by their general demeanour an antidote against their example in this particular. But what antidote can be found to neutralize the mischief inflicted by the levity and frivolity of the parlour-buffoon, whose highest object in going to the houses of his friends, seems to be to tell a merry story, and to excite a hearty laugh? In his hands and lips the pages of "Punch" are far more in place, as they are, perhaps, far

tleman declared that the yearly consumption of ardent spirits in that city amounted to 1,800,000 gallons of the value of £1,350,000. No fewer than 30,000 persons there go to bed drunk every Saturday night: 25,000 commitments are annually made on account of drunkenness, 10,000 of which are of females. Is Glasgow worse than many other places? Professors of religion, ponder this: and will you not by abstaining from a luxury lend the aid of your example to discountenance this monster crime and monster misery? It is in the power, and therefore is it not the duty, of the Christian church to do thus much to stop this evil, which sends more persons to the mad-house, the jail, the hulks, and the gallows, more bodies to the grave, and more souls to perdition, than any other that can be mentioned? Can the church be in earnest till it is prepared to make this sacrifice?

more frequently seen, than those of David, Isaiah, or Paul. Happily we have very few that go to this extreme of lightness and frivolity, but we have far too many, (as is the case with all denominations, and with ours not more than others,) whose hilarity is destructive at once of their dignity, their seriousness, and their usefulness, as ministers of Christ. Not that I contend for affected demureness, and solemn grimace, or even perpetual sermonizing conversation; as if a pastor could not talk, without violating official decorum, upon any topic but religion, and were letting down his dignity, or desecrating his sanctity, if he joined in ordinary conversation, and partook of, or even helped, the cheerfulness of the circle. By no means: he is not to appear like a spectre that has escaped from the cloister, to haunt the parlour, striking every face with paleness, and every tongue with silence. He is a man, a citizen, and a friend, as well as a minister; and has a stake and an interest in the great questions which occupy human minds, and engage their conversation: and provided he do not forget what is due to his ministerial character, he need not throw off what belongs to him in common with others. Nay, his very cheerfulness may be made a part of his earnestness, by being taken up and employed as a means to conciliate the affections of all around him. The man who is seriously cheerful, who engages in general conversation, and accommodates himself to the innocent habits of those with whom he associates, and does this in order really to do them spiritual good, and aid him in the great work of saving their souls, will find in the sublimity and sanctity of his end, a sufficient protection from abusing the means. This is widely different from the unchecked

levity and unrestrained frivolity in which some indulge, and which make it difficult to imagine how they can feel the value of souls, or the obligation of attempting their salvation. Howard at a masquerade, or Clarkson at a fancy ball, would not have been more out of place: a physician who has just come from the ravages of the plague, and was immediately going back to them, would not be more out of character, if he was seen wasting his time and amusing himself with the tricks of a merry andrew, than is a messenger of God's mercy, and a preacher of Christ's gospel, in the circles of folly and vanity, and he himself the Momus of the party.

But I now advert for a few moments to the field for a pastor's earnestness which is presented by the children of the Sunday-school. By a most fatal error, too many of our ministers deem those institutions as either beyond their duties, or below their notice. A pastor is, or ought to be, the head and chief of each department of religious instruction established in the congregation under his care. He is the teacher, the superintendent, and the party responsible for the religious knowledge, of all the flock, and the Sunday-school is a part of it. A wrong state of things has grown up among some of us Dissenters, for two three or four hundred rational minds and immortal souls are brought every Sabbath-day to our Sunday-schools, and to our places of worship, for the very purpose of receiving religious instruction; and yet all is carried on without its being once thought by the pastor that he has any obligation to attend to it; or by the congregation or the teachers, that he has by virtue of his office a right and a reason to interfere in it. In most cases the pastor has given the matter out

of his hand, and has thus raised up, or been accessory to there being raised up, a body of young instructors in matters of religion, who act independently of him, and who, in some instances, are confederated against him. This is not as it should be. The teachers are, or ought to be, a pastor's special care; to qualify them for their office, and to assist them in its duties, should be thought by him no inconsiderable part of his functions. Nor should even the children themselves be viewed as persons with whom he has nothing to do. There are always among them some whose minds have been brought to serious reflection, who are inquiring with solicitude after salvation, and whom he should take under his own special teaching and care, and aim to guide into the way of faith, peace, and holiness: and he should not neglect to give frequent, affectionate, and solemn addresses to the rest. In a Sunday-school of two or three hundred children there are as many immortal souls, exposed by their situation in life to peculiar dangers, yet all capable of eternal blessedness, and all brought weekly under the eye of the pastor: and yet by how many of our pastors are these hopeful objects of religious zeal and benevolence shut out of the sphere of their ministerial solicitude, and handed over to the Sunday-school teachers, as if there were no hope of a minister's saving the soul of a poor boy, nor any reward for his saving the soul of a poor girl! This obligation of attending to the souls of Sunday-scholars, while it is incumbent upon all ministers, is especially so upon those who are labouring amidst much discouragement in small congregations. Many of these men are continually uttering complaints as to the fewness of their hearers, and the inefficiency of their

labours; and yet perhaps have never thought of turning their attention to the two or three hundred youthful minds which are every Sabbath-day before their eyes, and under the sound of their voice. No one who ever threw his mind and heart into his Sunday-schools had to complain that he laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought. No part of ministerial labour yields a quicker or a larger reward. By some it is made the main pivot on which their whole system of religious instruction turns, and flourishing congregations have risen up under its potency. I have myself been the astonished and delighted witness of this, especially in one well-known instance,* and am so deeply impressed with its importance, that I conjure my brethren not to neglect this means of usefulness, or to throw away the golden opportunity which the circumstances of our country still hold out.

Nor is it Sunday-school instruction alone which claims our attention, but daily education. In this we must be in earnest also. It is one of the great subjects of the day: and belongs to us, as much as to any one. We must not allow the minds of the poor to be wholly withdrawn from our influence, but must exert ourselves according to our ability and opportunity to train them up for society and God. Others know and feel the importance of this, if we do not. The Roman Catholic priests are aware of it, so are the clergy of the Established Church, and so are the Methodist ministers: and shall Dissenting ministers be behind the most zealous and devoted friends of education? I trust not.

But there are other departments of the pastorate in which earnestness will manifest itself: there is visiting

* Mr Gunn of Christchurch Hampshire. Ed.

the sick, especially those whose disease is chronic, and leaves their minds at liberty for conversation; and there is also the difficult but incumbent duty of rebuke, warning, and ecclesiastical discipline. A devoted servant of Christ will never neglect the state of his church, but will be solicitous to maintain such order there, as shall be pleasing to him to whom the church belongs. Like a good shepherd he will look after his flock, and will endeavour to avoid the denunciations of God delivered by the prophet Ezekiel: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? The diseased have ye not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was lost." Impressive description of our duty! May we be found so discharging it as to avoid this fearful woe!

I may appropriately introduce here the words of the Bishop of Calcutta, when vicar of Islington, in his admirable and heart-searching introduction to the edition of "Baxter's Reformed Pastor," published by Collins, in his series of "Select Authors."

"What have we been doing as ministers? Lamentably as we have failed in a general estimate of the vast importance of our office, we have failed as lamentably in all those parts of it which relate to personal inspection and vigilance over our flocks. We have confined ourselves to preaching, to ecclesiastical duties, to occasional visits to the sick, to the administration of the sacraments, to the external and secular relation in which we stand to our parishes; but what we done in personal care and direction, in affectionate catechetical conferences, in going from house to house, in visiting every family and individual in our districts, in becoming acquainted with the characters, the wants, the state of the heart, the habits, the attendance upon public worship, the observance of the Sabbath, the instruction of children

and servants, the family devotions, of each house? Have we looked after each individual sheep with an eager solicitude? Have we denied ourselves our own ease, and pleasure, and indulgence, in order to 'go after Christ's sheep, scattered in this wicked world, that they may be saved for ever?' What do the streets and lanes of our cities testify concerning us? What do the highways and hedges of our country parishes say as to our fidelity and love to souls? What do the houses and cottages and sick chambers of our congregations and neighbourhoods speak? Where have we been? What have we been doing? Has Christ our Master seen us follow his footsteps, and going about doing good? Brethren, we are verily faulty concerning this. We have been content with public discourses, and have not urged each soul to the concerns of salvation. Blessed Jesus! thou knowest the guilt of thy ministers in this respect, above all others! We have been divines, we have been scholars, we have been disputants, we have been students; we have been every thing but the holy, self-denying, laborious, consistent, ministers of thy gospel."

It has long appeared probable to me, that we, as Dissenting ministers, have something to learn in reference to this part of our duty from the clergy of the Church of England, and even from the priests of the Church of Rome. We do not perhaps sufficiently enter into the meaning and functions implied in that very expressive phrase, "the cure of souls;" a phrase which comprehends far more than the preaching of sermons, and the duties of the Sabbath and the sanctuary, however well performed. There is a definiteness, an explicitness, in this beautiful expression, into which we have need more deeply to enter. It is true we have our word "pastor," which in the impressive Saxon term "shepherd," implies a great deal; but it is neither so specific nor so solemn as the description conveyed by "the cure of souls." Nor do I think we have all the functions which this phrase implies, so much within the range of our habitual contemplation

as those by whom it is employed. In leaving college, and entering upon the sphere of our ministerial labour, our attention is perhaps often chiefly fixed upon the pulpit, without taking sufficiently into consideration the various private duties of which this is but the centre: while the clergy, though not altogether neglecting the work of preaching, enter upon their parishes with a wider range of view, as regards the duties of their office. The visitation of the sick, the catechising of children, and an attention to private exposition of the Scriptures and individual cases, enter more into their plans of clerical activity than into ours. There seems to be with them more sense and admission of the claims which their flocks as individuals have upon their time and attention, than with us. Our sphere is felt to be the pulpit, and our relation to be to the congregation as a whole. It is not unlikely we take more pains in the preparation of our sermons; for as our discourses are usually much longer than those of the clergy of the Establishment, we must of course spend more time in composing them. It will also be said that the parochial system of the Church of England gives to its ministers, by its restriction to localities, advantages which we, whose flocks are scattered all over the expanse of a large town, do not possess. There is something in this, but not so much as appears at first sight, inasmuch as attachment to favourite preachers is as strongly felt in the Establishment as it is with us, and overleaps all distinctions of streets. It is also affirmed that it is more a part of the system of the Church of England to inculcate on their parishioners this looking up to their clergy in all spiritual matters out of the pulpit, as well as to his sermons in

it. If it be so, it must be confessed that it is an excellence; and if we have it not, the sooner we obtain it the better. There seems to be in our system as much room for it, as in that from which we have separated, perhaps more; since the voluntary choice of their pastor by the people themselves is a more solemn surrender into his hands of the oversight of their spiritual affairs, than the compulsory acceptance of the minister who has been appointed by a patron, without asking the consent or approbation of the congregation. But the fact is, we have too much contented ourselves with the functions of the preacher, to the neglect of those of the pastor, and have thus taught our people to regard us too exclusively in the light of the former. What we need, therefore, is more earnestness in the pastorate, as well as in the pulpit, for it is in this we are brought into most powerful competition with the clergy at this day. Let us then take up the phrase, as descriptive of the duties of our office, and consider ourselves as called by the Holy Ghost, chosen by the people, and ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, to "the cure of souls:" a cure which we are to carry out by all the beseeching entreating of the pulpit, and all the endless and ceaseless assiduities of the pastorate.

Such, then, is a view, and but an imperfect one too, of an earnest ministry.

I would have made it more comprehensive and impressive if I could: for the reality can never be overdrawn nor exaggerated. Let any one consider what that object must be which occupied the mind of Deity from eternity; which is the end of all the divine dispensations of creation, providence, and grace, in

our world; which is the purpose for which the Son of God expired upon the cross; which forms the substance of revealed truth, and employed the lives and pens of apostles; to which martyrs set the seal of their blood; in short, let him recollect that the end of the Christian ministry is the salvation of immortal souls, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then say if any thing less than an earnest ministry, is befitting such an object, or if earnestness can comprehend less than has been set forth in these chapters.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXAMPLES OF EARNESTNESS IN THE MINISTRY.

The power of example is proverbial. We are constituted to be moved, as well as directed, by it. It teaches us how to act, and impels us to action. Hence the excellence of Scripture; it is a book of models as well as of maxims. Towering above all the rest, standing out in bold relief beyond all the others, is the character of Christ. He is an example of all excellence, and an example to all persons. To the ministers of the gospel his beautiful and perfect embodiment of all that is holy and lovely commends itself with peculiar energy. He was himself a minister of the gospel, sent by the Father in the same manner as he has sent others. He is the great model, the Divine archetype as a preacher and a teacher, which they are to copy. He is to be imitated in the manner as well as in the matter of his preaching; he is to be closely and constantly followed in his liveliness, his tenderness, his fidelity, his solemnity. We of all men are under the most solemn obligations to tread in his steps and do as he did. But I now select from all his qualities, his earnestness. In this, as well as in every thing else, he surpassingly excelled all his most devoted servants. When he came into the world, he said, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written

of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." When he emerged from his obscurity at Nazareth, and entered on his public ministry, he commenced a career of increasing and untiring activity. His eye, his heart, his tongue, embraced one object, and one only, the salvation of souls. We see him always in action, never in repose. Follow him where we will, we find him always working, preaching, praying, or weeping, but never loitering. He gathered up the very fragments of his time, when waiting in the house of Martha for his food, and when waiting at the well of Samaria while his disciples had gone into the city to purchase provisions, and employed those brief intervals in doing good. He was the compassionate Saviour, and not the cold and heartless philosopher. His preaching was the breathing of a soul replete with love, his discourse was the overflowing of mercy. He was not a mere personification of reason, but an incarnation of love; and sent forth not the moon-beams of a cold and clear intellectuality, but the sun-rays of a fervid and fructifying benevolence. To save souls he scrupled not to go, where but for this object we should have never seen him, to feasts and weddings, as well as funerals. From the hour when he thus addressed his mother, "Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business," his meat and his drink were to do the will of his Father. He denied himself all that was of an indulgent and self-gratifying nature; his only relaxation was devotion, which, after labouring all day in the city, he sought by prayer upon the mountains, and in the midnight air. As a scene of earnestness, never surpassed till he ascended the hill of Calvary, behold him bathed in tears over the guilty city, and choked in his utter-

ance by the sobs with which the foresight of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem convulsed his bosom! O, that was a spectacle which was enough to draw into a sympathy of grief the moral universe! What a heart that must have been, which on such a spot, and at such a time, could find relief for its intense emotions only in tears! Truly has it been said, that melting scene is inferior in pathos, in tender and solemn grandeur, only to Calvary itself. But this was only a prelude to what followed. In prospect of the hour of the solemn and mysterious scenes of Gethsemane and Golgotha, he exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." His eagerness for man's salvation was such that the guilty heart of the traitor was too slow in its purpose for his love, and he quickened the movements of Judas by those memorable words, "What thou doest, do quickly." He made haste to the cross. He was almost impatient for the hour of sacrifice. He could brook no delay in love's redeeming work.

Here, ministers of the gospel, here is your pattern. This earnestness is your model. You are to be something like this. The work of Christ in saving souls is to be regarded in a double aspect by you, both as the means of your personal salvation, and the example for your official character. We have too much forgotten the latter. Even though as Christians we may have looked on his conduct as our exemplar, we have too much neglected to do so as ministers. As servants we have not kept our eyes fixed as we ought to have done, upon our Great Master. Shame upon us, that we have been so little careful to catch the fire of intense and ardent devotedness from this glowing and Divine example.

We have seen the sun, let us now turn to the stars: we have beheld the Master, let us now contemplate the servants. Perhaps the former is so high above you that you are discouraged by its loftiness and perfection: well, look now at some nearer your own level. First of all, observe the apostle Paul; and where shall we find any thing so nearly approaching to the earnestness of his Divine Lord, as the conduct of that wondrous man! From the moment of his conversion on his way to Damascus, he had but one object in existence, and that was the glory of God in the salvation of souls; and but one way of seeking it, and that was the preaching of the cross. Wherever he went, whatever he did, to whomsoever he addressed himself, he was ever watching for souls. Whether reasoning with the Jews in their synagogues; or discoursing with the philosophers on Mars' Hill; or preaching to the voluptuous inhabitants of Corinth; or appealing to the Ephesian elders at Miletus; or pleading in chains the cause of Christianity before the tribunal of Festus, in the presence of Agrippa; or writing letters from prison to the churches he had planted, we find him every where and always the earnest minister of Jesus Christ. There is one expression in his address to the Ephesian elders which reveals in a short compass the whole spirit and marrow of his preaching; "Remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one of you, night and day, with tears." The terrors of the Roman government could not extract from his firmness a single groan, but the sight of an immortal soul perishing in iniquity, and amidst fatal delusions, altogether unmanned him, and suffused his face with tears, which in other cases would have

been the sign of weakness. O those tears, those tears, how they reprove us for our insensibility, and how they prove to us our deficiencies! Every view we can take of this illustrious servant of the cross fills us with astonishment and admiration. His conversion and history seem designed to teach us how much energy may be compressed into one human heart, to be developed in one single life; what sufferings may be endured, what power exerted, what results produced, by one man who is constrained by the love of Christ, and filled with all the fulness of God; and what God can accomplish in fulfilling the purposes of his wisdom and love, by the instrumentality of an individual of our species. There is a short sentence in his epistle to the Philippians, which in a few words sums up his whole life and labours, "For me to live is Christ." What profundity of meaning, what developement of soul, what comprehension of purpose and plan, do those few monosyllables convey! "Christ is my life: apart from him and his work I have no separate existence. I have grown into that one object, and it absorbs me."

This is earnestness: and what obligation to cultivate it rested on Paul which does not rest on us? What was Christ to him, which he ought not to be to us? Why should he thus labour for souls, and not we? Is there a single reason which governed him, that ought not to constrain us? Ministers of Christ, read this great man's life with a view to know what you ought to be, and how you ought to live and labour. In view of what this blessed apostle was, and how he laboured, will you be satisfied with cold intellectuality, flowery orations, subtle metaphysics; with thinking you have answered the end of your

calling when you have composed two sermons a week, and kept your people tolerably well satisfied with your labours? Will you think it enough to be a close student, a hard reader, a good writer, though all this while souls are not converted to God, nor the cause of religion advanced in the world? Talk you of your hard labour, severe trials, scanty incomes, ungrateful congregations, and fickle friends? Listen to his tale, and be silent. "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" Is there to be found in human composition or history such a passage as this? In reading it who can help asking, "what have I done or suffered for Christ, that can give me a title to be ranked as a minister of Christ after this?"

But perhaps this also is too lofty an example to have much weight with you; then take an instance next from the Nonconformist's Memorial. It appears from the diary of that eminent servant of Christ, Oliver Heywood, that in one year, besides his stated work on

the Lord's-day, he preached one hundred and fifty times, kept fifty days of fasting and prayer, and nine of thanksgiving, and travelled fourteen hundred miles, in the service of Christ and immortal souls. And when we consider that these journeys must have been either on foot or on horseback, this distance was more than ten thousand miles by our modern railways. And then think of Baxter, that wondrous man, who though hunted and imprisoned by the demon of persecution, and tortured with the stone, was always preaching and writing, till he had composed and published those hundred and twenty volumes, the very writing of which, as to the mechanical labour alone, seemed enough to occupy a whole life, and as to which the celebrated Dr. Barrow said, that "his practical works were never mended, nor his controversial ones ever confuted."

Now turn to those extraordinary men, Wesley and Whitfield; and who can read the account of their amazing labours, and equally amazing success; without something of a self-reproachful and desponding feeling, as if we were living almost in vain? When we see them dividing their whole lives between the pulpit, the closet, and the class room; sacrificing all domestic enjoyment and personal ease; encountering savage mobs, and addressing congregated thousands; travelling backward and forward the whole length of the kingdom, and crossing the ocean many times; moving the populations of cities, and filling nations with the fame and the fruit of their evangelical labours; breathing little else than the atmosphere of crowded chapels and preaching rooms, except when they lifted up their voice under the canopy of heaven; regaling themselves, not with the dainties of the table, nor the repose of the

soft luxurious couch, but with the tears of the penitent, and the songs of the rejoicing believer; making it their one and only business to seek the salvation of souls, and their one and only happiness to rejoice in the number of their conversions; indifferent alike to the savage fury of their persecutors, and the fond flatteries of their followers; sometimes rising from a bed of sickness to address the multitude in circumstances which rendered it probable they would exchange the pulpit for the tomb; to sum up all in one short sentence wearing out life in labour so great that it looked as if they were in haste to die: when we see this, how can we endure to think of the way in which we are living, or how can we imagine we are living at all? How can we read their lives, and not blush for ourselves? How can we witness their earnestness, and not feel as if we knew nothing of the passion for saving souls?

And what shall be said of Brainerd, the first missionary of Christ amongst the Indians of North America? See him harassed by nervous and gloomy dejection, and wearing down by slow consumption; yet for the love of souls dwelling amidst savages, helping to build his own comfortless and ill-furnished hut; living at times on parched corn; when travelling and benighted in the woods, sleeping, if sleep he could, wet and cold in a tree; throwing himself down on his return to his own solitary dwelling on his hard bed, with none to comfort him; and amidst such privations, long tried and harassed by the want of success in his apostolical labours; and all this for the love of souls, and the glory of Christ? Where, O where, even among modern missionaries, to say nothing of ministers at home, do we find this rigorous self-denial, this self-sacrificing

disposition, this intense desire after the salvation of souls?

I may profitably refer to one more instance of devotedness, and that shall be of a pastor, Dr. Payson of America, whose biography should be read by every Christian minister. Many have read it, and I should hope with no small advantage. During his ministry his solicitude for the salvation of souls was so earnest, that he impaired his health by the frequency of his fastings and the importunity of his prayers. His whole life was spent in one constant series of efforts to produce revivals of religion; and the anguish of his mind, when his labours failed, was so acute as to bring on bodily disease. It was said of him by his biographer, that his language, his conversation, and his whole deportment were such as brought home and fastened to the minds of his hearers the conviction, that he believed, and therefore spoke. So important did he regard such a conviction in the attendants on his ministry, that he made it the topic of one of his addresses to his clerical brethren, which he entitled, "The importance of convincing our hearers that we believe what we preach." In the course of this address he remarks, that a minister who acted thus,

"in delivering his message as an ambassador of Christ, would show that he felt deeply penetrated with a conviction of its truth and infinite importance. He would speak like one whose whole soul was filled with his subject. He would speak of Christ and his salvation, as a grateful, admiring people would speak of a great and generous deliverer, who had devoted his life for the welfare of his country. He would speak of eternity, as one whose eye had been wearied by attempting to penetrate its unfathomable recesses, and describe its awful realities, like a man who stood on the verge of time, and had lifted the veil which conceals them from the view of mortals. Thoughts that glow and words that burn would compose his public

addresses, and while a sense of the dignity of his official character, and the infinite importance of his subject, would lead him to speak as one having authority, with indescribable solemnity, weight, and energy, a full recollection that he was by nature a child of wrath, and that he was addressing fellow men and fellow sinners, mingled with compassion for their wretched state, and ardent desire after their salvation, would spread an air of tenderness over his discourses, and invest him with that affectionate, melting, persuasive earnestness of manner, which is best calculated to affect and penetrate the heart. To say all in one word, he would speak like an ambassador of Him who spake as never man spake, and we would say, 'we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.'"

When disabled by increasing disease from preaching, Dr. Payson carried with him into his sick chamber all his undiminished earnestness for the salvation of souls. Having come from, on one occasion, the administration of the Lord's Supper, he rose, and thus addressed his flock:

"Ever since I became a minister, it has been my earnest wish that I might die from disease which would allow me to preach a farewell sermon to my people; but as it is not probable I shall ever be able to do this, I will attempt to say a few words now: it may be the last time I shall ever address you. This is not merely a presentiment: it is an opinion founded on facts, and maintained by physicians who know my case, that I shall never behold another spring.

"And now, standing on the borders of the eternal world, I look back upon my past ministry, and on the manner on which I have performed its duties; and oh, my hearers, if you have not performed your duties better than I have done, woe! woe! be to you, unless you have an Advocate and an Intercessor in heaven. We have lived together twenty years, and have spent more than a thousand Sabbaths together, and I have given you at least two thousand warnings. I am now going to give an account how they were given; and you, my hearers, will soon have to give an account how they were received. One more warning I will give you. Once more your shepherd, who will be yours no longer, entreats you to flee from the wrath to come. Oh, let me have the happiness of seeing my dear people attend to their eternal interests, that I may not have reason to say, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.'"

After this he entered his chapel but once more. Confined now to his house and to his room, he still carried out his intense desires to be useful in saving souls, by dictating letters and addresses to individuals and bodies of men. Persons under anxious concern for their salvation, young converts entering on the Christian life, ministers just commencing the arduous duties of their office, and various bodies and classes of individuals, were sent for to visit him in his sick chamber, and receive his dying counsels and admonitions. What messages also went forth from that scene of agony and of glory to ministers and friends! His "ruling passion was strong in death." His love for preaching was as invincible as that of the miser, who dies grasping his treasure. Dr. Payson directed a label to be attached to his breast when dead, with the words, "Remember the words which I have spoken unto you, while I was yet present with you;" that they might be read by all who came to look at his corpse, and by them, he being dead, yet spake. The same words at the request of his people, were engraven on the plate of his coffin, and read by thousands on the day of his interment.

Here was a beautiful instance of ministerial earnestness; and if I have dwelt longer on this than on some of the still more illustrious ones which have preceded it, the reason may be found in the fact, that it is the example of a minister of our own times, and placed in nearly the same circumstances as ourselves; and also in the wish that many who have not read that most instructive piece of ministerial biography, may be induced by these extracts to peruse the volume. That man's heart must be in a bad state indeed, both as a Christian and a minister, who is not made the holier and more

earnest by contemplating that bright and lovely example.

Leaving the ministry, and turning towards the laity, for some rare examples of unquenchable earnestness, I find two deserving above most of honourable mention, and assiduous imitation, Lady Huntingdon, and the late Thomas Wilson of Highbury. In the former we see a peeress, related of course to many noble families, to whom the honours of the court and the elegances of fashion were accessible, relinquishing from the hour of her conversion to God, all those pomps and gaieties of the world, and consecrating her rank, her influence, and her wealth, to His glory and the salvation of souls; quitting the saloons of the gay for the conventicles of the pious, and the society of nobles, statesmen, orators and wits, to hold converse with itinerant preachers; selling her jewels to enable her to purchase chapels; opening her drawing room for religious worship; and undiverted and unmoved by the wonder, reproach, and sneers of a proud and scoffing aristocracy, pursuing with an intensity which they could comprehend as little as they could the objects to which it was directed, the spread of evangelical truth, and the salvation of immortal souls, both among the rich and the poor. In this one object her whole life was bound up, apart from it she had neither occupation nor enjoyment.

Pretty much the same in substance may be said of the late Treasurer of Highbury College. We needed not the very valuable and interesting memoir of this inestimable man, with which his son has favoured the world, to convince us of this; much as the conviction is deepened, and the impression perpetuated, by the

complete view of his life and character there presented to our view: those who knew Mr Wilson, (and who of every party in the religious world did not know him?) always considered him as a person of extraordinary zeal and great benevolence, and a most useful specimen of an earnest man. This character will be assigned to him even by those who differed from him in some views of the object on which he lavished the energies of his active mind, and the resources of his ample fortune. But now that the whole outward career of this indefatigable man is laid before us, and the mechanism of his heart, as the spring of his energy, is disclosed to us in this seasonable and instructive biography, we learn the important lesson, how much one man, whose heart is given to the work, may accomplish in the way of evangelising our dark and wretched world. Perhaps modern times have produced and presented few more striking instances of that quality of character which it is the design of this volume to illustrate and to enforce. He selected his one object of life, and that was the support and spread of evangelical religion by building chapels, and educating and supporting ministers, in connexion with the denomination to which he belonged. For this he retired from business, and consecrated to it his time, his fortune, his influence, and his piety. His journeys from home, and his occupation at home, were in a great measure devoted to this. He had his office, his clerk, his house of business, his correspondence, all in reference to this, just as the merchant has for his commercial affairs. To this were directed his conversation in company, and his musing and letters when alone. The consummation of one scheme of usefulness in his line of effort was

but the commencement of another. While others talked, he worked. We knew where to find him, and how he was employed. If a voice from heaven had commanded him to build chapels and educate ministers, he could not have pursued that object with more fixedness of aim, unity of action, and steadiness of perseverance, than he manifested. He knew his object, and therefore needed no counsel; he loved it, and suffered nothing to divert his mind from it: he saw its practicability and hearkened to no objections. If others would act with him, well; if not, he would go alone. It was not brilliant talents, nor a princely fortune, nor a commanding eloquence; though he had good abilities, a handsome income, and an easy utterance; but it was earnestness that made him what he was, and enabled him to do what he did. Yes, Thomas Wilson was an earnest man: and would to God that all whom he helped to introduce into the ministry, partook, in the still more sacred duties of their calling, of his intensity of action.

CHAPTER IX.

MOTIVES TO EARNESTNESS.

I. Earnestness is demanded of the Christian minister alike by his theme and his object.

When Pilate proposed to his illustrious prisoner the question, "What is truth?" he brought before him the most momentous subject which can engage the attention of a rational creature; and if Christ refused to give an answer, his silence is to be accounted for by the captious or trifling spirit of the querist, and not by any insignificance in the question. Truth is the most valuable thing in the universe, next to holiness; and truth, even that truth which by way of eminence and distinction is called the truth, is the theme of our ministry. Take any branch of general science, be it what it may, and however valuable and important it may be considered, its most enthusiastic student and admirer cannot claim for it that supremacy which is implied in the expression, the truth. Who shall adjust the claims to this distinction of the various physical and moral sciences, and declare, in opposition to the false pretensions of usurpers, which is the rightful possessor of the throne? Who? The God of truth himself; and He has done it: He has placed the Bible on the seat of majesty in the temple of truth, and has called upon all systems of philosophy whatever to fall down and do it

homage. This is our subject: eternal, immutable truth. Truth given pure from its Divine Source, and bearing with it the evidence and impress of its own Omniscient Author. O what, compared with the truths of revelation, are the loftiest and noblest of the sciences: chemistry, with its beautiful combinations and affinities; or astronomy, with its astounding numbers, magnitudes, distances, and revolutions, of worlds; or geology, with its marvellous and incalculable dates of bygone millions of ages? What is matter, inert or organized, however diversified, classified, or combined with its laws of necessity, compared with minds and souls, and the laws of moral truth by which their free actions are regulated? What is nature, to the God of nature? What the heavens and the earth, to the glorious mind that looks out upon them through the organ of vision, as from a window commanding the grand and boundless prospect? What the fleeting term of man's existence upon earth, with its little cycles of care, sorrow, and labour, compared with the eternal ages through which the soul holds on her course of deathless existence? The works of creation are a dim and twilight manifestation of God's nature, compared with the grandeur and more perfect medium of redemption. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ is itself a wonder and a mystery to which all other displays of Deity are darkness; this is the shekinah in the holy of holies of the temple of God's creation, towards which all orders of created spirits, from the most distant parts of the universe, reverently turn and do homage to the great God our Saviour. This, this, is our theme, the truth of God concerning himself; the truth of an incarnate Deity; the truth of man's redemption by the cross; the truth of the

moral law, the eternal standard of rectitude, the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the truth of the gospel, the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God; the truth of immortality, of heaven, and of hell: the truth couched under the symbols of the Levitical law, and the visions of the Jewish prophets, and fully exhibited in the gospels of the evangelists, and the inspired letters of the apostles. Again I ask, exultingly and rapturously, what are the discoveries of Newton, or of Davy; or the inventions of Watt, or of Arkwright, compared with these themes? Viewing man in relation to immortality, as sinful and accountable, what is art or science, compared with revealed truth? And shall we, can we, be otherwise than earnest in the promulgation of this truth? Shall we touch such themes with a careless hand and a drowsy mind? Shall we slumber over truths which keep in wakeful and energetic activity all other orders of created intelligences, and which are at once the object and the rest of the Uncreated Mind? Let us look at the earnestness with which the sons of science pursue their studies. With what enthusiasm they delve into the earth, or gaze through the telescope at the heavens, or hang over the fire; with what prolonged and patient research they carry on their experiments, and pursue their analyses; how unwearied in toil, and how enduring in disappointment, they are; and how rapturously they hold up to the world's gazing and wondering eye some new particle of truth, which they have found out after all this peering and prying into nature's secrets! Ministers of the gospel, is it thus with the men who have to find out the truths of nature, and shall we who have the volume of inspired revealed truth opened before us,

drone, loiter, and trifle over its momentous realities? Shall the example of earnestness be taken from him who analyses man's lifeless flesh, to tell us by the laws of organic chemistry its component parts, rather than from him who has to do with the truths that relate to the immortal soul? Shall he whose discoveries and lessons have no higher object than our material globe, and no longer date than its existence, be more intensely in earnest than we who have to do with the truth that relates to God and the whole moral universe, and is to last throughout eternity? What deep shame should cover us for our want of ardour and enthusiasm in such a service as this!

And then what is the purpose for which this truth, so grand, so awful, so sublime, is revealed by God, and is to be preached by us? Not simply to gratify curiosity; not merely to conduct the mind seeking for knowledge to the fountain where it may slake its thirst; no, but to save the immortal soul from sin, death, and hell, and conduct it to the abodes of glorious immortality. The man who can handle such topics, and for such a purpose, in an unimpassioned careless manner, and with an icy heart, is the most astounding instance of guilty lukewarmness in the universe: to his self contradiction no parallel can be found, and he remains a fearful instance how far it is possible for the human mind to go in the most obvious, palpable, and guilty inconsistency. A want of earnestness in the execution of that commission, which is designed to save immortal souls from eternal ruin, and to raise them to everlasting life, is a spectacle which, if it were not so common, would fill us with amazement, indignation, and contempt. We have read the speeches of the great masters of eloquence,

both of ancient and modern times: and have sympathised with the intense anxiety, and untiring effort, with which they gave utterance to the mighty words that flashed from their burning souls; and do we condemn as an enthusiast the Athenian orator who so agonized to save his country from the yoke of Philip; the majestic Roman who roused the indignation of the republic against the treason of Cataline; or our own Wilberforce, who for twenty years lifted his voice in appeals to the justice and mercy of a British Parliament against the atrocities of the slave trade? On the contrary, we deem no eulogy sufficient to express our admiration of their noble enthusiasm. But our praise of them, is the condemnation of ourselves; for how far short of them do we fall in earnestness, though the salvation of a single soul, out of all the multitudes that come under the influence of our ministrations, is an event, which is inconceivably more momentous in its consequences, because enduring through eternity, than all the objects collectively for which those men exhausted the energies of their intellects and lives. Do we really believe that we are either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to them that hear us? Or is this mere official phraseology, never intended to be understood in the ordinary import of the words? Is it a matter of fact, or only the solemn garnish of a sermon, the trickery and puffing of pulpit vanity, that souls are perpetually rising from beneath our ministry into the felicities and honours of the skies, or dropping from around our pulpits into the bottomless pit? Are companies of immortal spirits continually summoned from our congregations to inhabit eternity, and people heaven or hell, to swell the numbers of the

redeemed, or to add to the multitude of the lost? If this be true, (and we are gross deceivers, mere pulpit actors, reverend hypocrites, if we do not believe in its truth) then where is the earnestness that alone can give consistency to our profession, and is appropriate to our situation, and adequate to our convictions? Have we really become so carelessly, so criminally familiar with such topics as salvation and damnation, that we can descant upon them with the same calmness, coolness, not to say indifference, with which a public lecturer will discuss a branch of natural philosophy? O where is our reason, our religion, our consistency?

II. Earnestness is imperatively demanded by the state of the human mind, viewed in relation to the truths and objects just set forth.

This was glanced at in an earlier part of the work, but must be now resumed and amplified. The entreating and beseeching importunity which was employed by the apostle, and which is found to be no less necessary for us, presupposes on the part of its objects, a reluctance to come into a state of reconciliation with God, which must be assailed by the force of vehement persuasion. Although we have to treat with a revolted world, a world engaged in mad conflict with Omnipotence, yet if the guilty rebels were weary of their hostilities, and in utter hopelessness of success, were prepared on the first offer of mercy to throw down their arms, and in the spirit of contrition sue for pardon, ours would be an easy mission, and we might spare ourselves the trouble of earnestness and expostulation. But the very reverse is the case. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The hearts of men are

fully set in them to do evil. We find them taken up, occupied, influenced, governed, by the palpable and visible things of the present life; and our business is to engage them in constant resistance to the undue influence of things seen and temporal, by a vigorous faith in the things that are unseen and eternal: our aim and labour are, by the power of the unseen world to come, to deliver them from the spell of the present state, with whose pageantry they are enamoured, and under whose fascination they are well pleased to continue. And all the while they are so occupied by the pursuits of business, so engrossed by the cares, comforts, and trials of life; and are in such breathless haste to pursue, such distracting bustle to possess, and such ardent hope to enjoy, the various objects of their earthly desires, that when we call their attention to serious religion, as the one thing needful, we are deemed intrusive, impertinent, and obstructive, as one who would stop another in a race, to offer him an object foreign to that for which he is contending.

But the difficulty stops not here; if this were all, we should have only a very small share of the opposition which now calls forth our energy and requires our most strenuous efforts; for when we have succeeded in gaining a hearing and arresting attention, we have to contend not only with an indisposition to receive the truth, but a determined hostility against it. We have, as our first business, to fasten a charge of guilt upon men naturally disposed to think well of themselves: to produce a sense of utter worthlessness and depravity in those who, at the utmost length to which their concession will go, admit only some few imperfections and infirmities; to displace a feeling of complacency by one

of self-condemnation and abhorrence; and to substitute for a general and unhumbled dependence upon Divine mercy, such a conviction of exposure to the curse of God's violated law, as makes it difficult for the trembling penitent to see how his pardon can be harmonised with the claims of justice: to offer salvation upon terms which leave not the smallest room for self-gratulation, or the operation of pride; indeed to carry such a message as frequently excites disgust, calls forth the bitterest enmity of the human heart, and arouses all its self-love in determined hostility. And then the salvation exhibited in the gospel is not only opposed to the pride, but to the passions, of fallen man. It requires the excision of sins dear as our right hand, the surrender of objects which have enamoured our whole soul, the breaking up of habits which have grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength.

Sometimes we have, in addition to all this, to summon our hearers to a war without, as well as to a conflict within, and to verify the words of Christ, that he came to send a sword instead of peace, and to set parents against children, and children against parents. What minister has not sometimes felt his courage ready to quail, and his steadfastness in danger of faltering, when called to lead on some persecuted convert to brave the cruel mockings, reproaches, frowns, threats, and violence, of his nearest and dearest earthly connexions? I agonize as I write, to think what I, among others, have witnessed of this kind. Verily it is through tribulation that some, even in these peaceful times, are called to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And then, following on the difficulties of the christian ministry, to prevent the first impres-

sions of divine truth from vanishing like the cloud, or exhaling like the dew; to drive the inquirer from finding repose any where but at the cross of Christ; to guard the feeble, and to inspire the timid with courage; to detect the deceit of the heart, and to aid the novice in breaking off from besetting sins; to inspire a resolution of crucifying the flesh, and to stimulate the soul to an ever onward progress in sanctification; to meet the epidemic malady of our nature, which assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, with a proportionate and well adapted variety of treatment; to help the believer to beat down his foes under his feet, and amidst all his various trials, temptations, and difficulties, to continue steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, notwithstanding the counteracting influence of much unremoved corruption in his heart; this, all this, must require in him who has to do it, earnestness of the most collected and concentrated kind.

To carry on the ministry of reconciliation in this revolted world, with the intention and desire of recovering its inhabitants from sin and Satan unto God, when the opposition to be overcome is considered, must appear to every reflecting mind the most hopeless of all human undertakings, apart from the aid of the Holy Spirit. It is this alone that can induce us to continue in the ministry another hour. Without this agency, we must retire in utter despair. But this is not to be conceived of, much less expected, apart from human instrumentality; and man's earnestness is the very species of instrumentality which the Divine Agent employs. It is not the feeble ministrations of the luke-

warm and the negligent that God blesses for the conversion of souls, but the heart-breathed, fervent wrestlings of the ardent and the diligent. He maketh the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers. There is then a double argument for earnestness, in the difficulties which are to be subdued in the accomplishment of our object, and the necessity of the co-operating agency of the Spirit of God. The former shows the indispensable necessity of such earnestness, and the latter encourages us to put it forth. Without it, we cannot look for the aid of the Spirit; and without the aid of the Spirit, it would be exerted in vain. May we be able to take a right view both of our obstacles and our resources!

III. Consider the aspect of the times, as affecting the human mind, and the objects of our ministry.

The view which has been just given of the difficulties that lie in the way of the faithful minister, applies to all countries and to all times, inasmuch as the depravity of human nature is co-extensive with the race of man. But still there may, and do, exist circumstances to give greater force to these difficulties, in one age and country, which are not found, at any rate to the same amount, in others. The features of our own age are strikingly impressive, and in no small degree hostile to the success of the gospel, and the prevalence of evangelical piety.

The sphere of human pursuits, whether we consider the active or speculative departments, is filled with unusual energy and excitement. Earnestness is the characteristic of the age. If we turn our attention to trade, we see men throwing their whole soul into its busy occupations, and labouring as if their salvation in

another world depended upon their success on earth. What ardour of competition; what rage for speculation; what looking about for novel schemes, and what eagerness to embrace them when offered; what hazardous and reckless gambling do we see all around us; leaving out the impetus to all this which the railway system has introduced, and saying nothing of the multitudes, who, instead of plodding onward in the beaten path of regular trade, endeavour, by watching the share market, to make one bound to wealth: how engrossing are the pursuits of secular business, in these days of large returns and small profits! Think of the consumption of time, and the absorption of soul, which are necessary to maintain credit and respectability; and also the strength of religious principle which is indispensable to follow the things that are just, true, honourable, and of good report. How many professors are in danger of being carried away, how many are carried away, by the tricks, artifices, and all but actual dishonesties, of modern trade: and what but a powerful and energetic ministry can be expected to rouse and help God's professing people to bear up against, and to keep in check, much more to subdue, this sordid and selfish spirit? What can be sufficient but an intense devotedness on the part of ministers to make things unseen and eternal bear down the usurping power of things seen and temporal? Who but the man that knows how to deal with invisible realities, and to wield the powers of the world to come, can pluck the worldling from the whirlpool of earthly mindedness, which sucks down so many, or prevent the professing Christian from being drawn into it? If our own minds are not much impressed with the awful glories and terrors of eternity,

we cannot speak of these things in such a manner as is likely to rescue our hearers from the ruinous fascinations of Mammon. How we seem to want a Baxter and a Doolittle; an Edwards and a Howe; a Whitfield and a Wesley, to break in with their thunder upon the money-loving, money-grasping spirit of this grossly utilitarian age!

Then think of the engrossing power of politics. What a spell has come over the popular mind from this source, since the tremendous outburst of the French revolution: for more than half a century the potency of this subject has been perpetually augmenting, till the rustic in the village, as well as the merchant in the city; the recluse student of the cloister, no less than the man of the exchange, have alike yielded themselves up to the influence of the newspaper, now accommodated, not only to every party in politics, but to every creed in religion, and at the same time cheapened down almost to the poorest member of society. This is matter neither of surprise, nor provided it do not thrust out of consideration other and still more important matters, of regret. It is but the constitution of our country developing the energies of its popular element. The people are claiming their share of power and influence; may they prepare themselves by knowledge and piety to exercise it rightly! The stream and tendency of opinion in Europe at large, as well as in our own country, are evidently democratic: but without education and religion the nations will daily become desirous of more liberty, and at the same time less capable of enjoying and preserving it. The less they feel of outward force and of the compulsion of secular power, the more they need the control of moral principles. At such a time, when the elements of good

government are, so to speak, in a state of projection, and amidst much repulsion and attraction amongst themselves, are crystallizing into their proper figures, there will be such an unusual degree of interest felt in this great matter, as to throw into the shade matters of still deeper moment.

While all this is obvious in the state of modern society, will any one deny that we want an earnest ministry to break in some degree the spell, and leave the soul at liberty for the affairs of the kingdom which is not of this world? When politics have come upon the minds, hearts, and imaginations of the people, for six days out of the seven, invested with the charms of eloquence, and decked with the colours of party; when the orator and the writer have both thrown the witchery of genius over the soul; how can it be expected that tame, spiritless, vapid common-places from the pulpit, sermons coming neither from the head nor the heart, having neither weight of matter, nor grace of manner; neither genius to compensate for the want of taste, nor taste to compensate for the want of genius; and what is still worse, having no unction of evangelical truth, no impress of eternity, no radiance from heaven, no terror from hell; in short, no adaptation to awaken reflection, to produce conviction, or to save the soul; how can it be expected, I say, that such sermons can be useful to accomplish the purposes for which the gospel is to be preached? What chance have such preachers, amidst the tumult, to be heard or felt, or what hold have they upon public attention, amidst the high excitement of the times in which we live? Their hearers too often feel, that listening to their sermons on the Sabbath, after what they have heard or read during

the week, is as if they were turning from brilliant gas-light, to the dim and smoking spark of tallow and a rush.

Another characteristic of our age is an ever-growing taste for elegance, refinement, and luxurious gratification. I cannot wonder at this, nor, if it be kept within proper bounds, greatly regret it. It is next to impossible that the progress of art, and the increase of wealth, should not add to the embellishments of life, and multiply the sources of tasteful enjoyment. But just in proportion as we multiply the attractions of earth, is the danger of our making it our all, and leaving heaven out of sight, and learning to do without it. This is now affecting the church, and the hardy and self-denying spirit of our practical Christianity is in danger of being emasculated, and of degenerating into a soft and sickly effeminacy. Elegance and extravagance, luxurious entertainments and expensive feasts, are beginning to corrupt the simplicity that is in Christ: and amidst sumptuous buildings, gorgeous furniture, costly dress, and gay equipages, professors of religion are setting their affections too much upon things upon earth, and turning away from the glory of the cross, to the glory of the world. Who is to call them off from this pageantry, and make them by God's grace feel how vain are all these things? Who can set up a breakwater against the billows of this ocean of worldly-mindedness, and guard the piety of the church from being entirely swept away by a flood of ungodliness? Who but a pastor that can speak in power and demonstration of the Spirit, a man who shall rise Sabbath after Sabbath in the pulpit, clothed with a potency to throw into shadow, by his vivid representations of heaven and eternity, all these

painted nothings, on which his hearers are in danger of squandering their immortal souls?

Akin to this is a continually augmenting desire after amusement, for the supply of which hosts of ingenious and accomplished persons are in constant requisition. A love for pleasure, diversion, and recreation, is an appetite evidently increasing; and there are those who are ever ingenious and ever busy to supply its demands. Religion is no enemy to rational enjoyment, even though it be not strictly scriptural; and those who supplant the low and vulgar sensualities on which the multitude have fed, by pleasures more refined and elevated, are doing service to their country and to their species. But still, a taste for amusement, both mental and bodily, may be carried too far, and many foreseeing and deeply reflective minds are of opinion that it is prevailing too far now.

There cannot be a thoughtful mind, if it looks upon our sojourn in this world as a probation for eternity, but must reflect with serious alarm and grief upon the endless devices which are suggested by the wisdom that comes from beneath, to hide from men their duty and their destiny as immortal creatures. It seems as if by common consent, men were striving who should be most successful, by inventing new kinds of diversions, to blot from the mind all considerations of eternity. Pleasure-taking is the taste of the day, a taste which has been increased into an appetite by the facilities for travelling afforded by railways. Before its desolating influence, the sanctity of the Sabbath, and with it of course the prevalence of religion, are likely to be destroyed. It may be said that any thing is better than the ale-house and the gin-shop. This is freely admitted, but it may be

questioned whether some of the modern stimulants to pleasure do not lead to, and not from, those scenes of iniquity. The people, it is affirmed, must have recreation. Be it so, but let it be of a healthful kind, and let the great aim of all who have any influence upon the public mind be to endeavour to implant a taste for the recreations afforded by cheap and wholesome literature, by quiet home enjoyments, and, above all, by the sacred delights of true piety.

In connection with this may be mentioned, as one particular species of amusement, the taste for works of humour, which has much increased in this country within the last ten years. There is no sin in mirth; man is made to enjoy it, and there is a time to laugh as well as to weep. And he must be a very misanthrope, a vampire which in the dark night of sorrow would suck the last drop of happiness from the human sufferer, who would forbid the smiles of gladness, and every thing which ministers to the gratification of the laughter-loving heart. But it is a different thing from this, to wish to keep this propensity within due bounds, to prevent it from becoming the staple of life, and to remind men that they have other things to do in this world than to laugh and be merry. Dr. Vaughan says,

"We are not certain that some of our wise men do wisely, who are going abroad just now with their cap and bells, in the hope of securing better attention to their lessons from the foolish. A fondness for grotesque jokes and everlasting caricature, bears as little resemblance to manly feeling, as the ecstacies of a young lady over the last new novel. Truth is a grave matter, and can owe little ultimately to the services of a buffoon. It loses half its dignity, if often presented in association with the ridiculous. Those who find their chief pleasure in broad farce, are rarely capable of a due exercise of earnest and reverential feeling. Your great wits do not spare their best friends, and your votaries of fun are generally persons prepared to sacrifice

any thing to their god. The mind which is wont to pay much homage to the laughers, too often forgets to pay a real homage to any thing higher. In such a service, the fine edge of moral feeling is almost of necessity worn away. Not that we should send a man to the bow-string because he has indulged a laugh. On the contrary, the man who cannot so indulge is not a man to our liking. There is something wrong in him, physically, mentally, and morally. All truly healthful men, in the spiritual as well as in the natural sense, know how to enjoy their laugh. But your great laughers are generally slow workers. To make a merriment of folly is not to displace it by wisdom. Our proper business here is neither to grin nor to whine, but to be men. We say not that good may never be done by means of ridicule, but we are convinced that its general effect is such as we have ventured to indicate. It is an instrument, moreover, which has two edges; use it, and you have no right to complain of its being used." British Quarterly Review, No. vi, p. 254.

These are wise and true sayings, as seasonable as they are important, and called for by the excessive taste for that species of composition which now prevails. If any thing need be added in corroboration of these arguments it is the fact stated by the justly lamented Dr. Arnold, that since the publication of periodical works of humour, he had perceived a visible declension of manly sentiment and serious thoughtfulness among the elder boys of his school. This is strong and decisive testimony as to the influence of a continued indulgence in broad farce. Is there not precisely the same effect produced on the minds of our young men? Nothing can be more opposed to the serious spirit which true religion requires, or more destructive of it, than this constant supply of new materials for laughter. Nor does the mischief stop with the young and the worldly, it is infecting the professors of religion. It is hard to conceive how earnestness and spirituality can be maintained by those whose tables are covered, and whose leisure time is consumed, by the bewitching inspirations

of the god of laughter. There is little hope of our arresting the evil, except we make it our great business to raise up a ministry who shall not themselves be carried away with the torrent; who shall be grave, without being gloomy; serious, without being melancholy; and who, on the other hand, shall be cheerful without being frivolous, and whose chastened mirthfulness shall check, or at any rate reprove, the excesses of their companions. What a demand does this state of things prefer for the most intense earnestness in our Sabbath-day exercises, both our prayers and our sermons! In this modern taste we have a new obstacle to our usefulness of a most formidable kind, which can be subdued only by God's blessing upon our fidelity and zeal. Men are wanted, who shall by their learning, science, and general knowledge, give weight to their opinions, and influence to their advice, in their private intercourse with their flocks; and shall, by their powerful and evangelical preaching, control this taste, and counteract it by a better.

Nor must I omit to notice, and to notice with peculiar emphasis, the impetus that is now given to the human understanding through all its gradations, from the highest order of intellect down to the humblest classes of the labouring population. I have already alluded to this subject, but on account of its importance must here refer to it again, and a little more at length. As regards the labouring classes, education is advancing among them with rapid strides, as far at least as the counteracting tendency of the manufacturing system will allow. The poor must, and will, be instructed. The change of opinion on this subject that has come over a large portion of the community within the last quarter

of a century, is indeed marvellous; and instead of tirades upon the danger of educating the people, we now hear from the same persons descants upon the evils of ignorance. This is a happy change, and its results will be auspicious, but they will not be without some temporary admixture of evil. It is really refreshing to read the schemes which are now put forth for the education of the working classes, by all parties in religion and politics. And improvement in education is not confined, and cannot be confined, to the lower classes. The universal mind is awakened, and in motion onwards: it is in a state of intense excitement and irrepressible activity. Discoveries in science, and inventions in art, come so fast upon us, that we have scarcely recovered from the surprise produced by one, before another calls upon us to indulge in new wonder. Feats of human skill, especially in the department of engineering, are performed or projected, which make man in the pride of his intellect feel as if nothing was impossible to him. As might be expected, knowledge is flowing, by the thousand rills of the press and cheap books, through every department of society. The annual expenditure of millions of pounds in cheap literature shows to what extent information on all subjects is reaching all classes from workmen upwards. Knowledge is the great idol around which the multitudes are gathering to pay their homage and record their vows. Is there any thing in such a state of things at which the friends of religion should take alarm? Quite the contrary. Christianity began her career, as every tyro in history well knows, in the most enlightened age, and amongst the most polished nations, of antiquity; and has never from that moment to the present, shrunk from the day-light of

learning and science, to skulk in the darkness and gloom of barbaric ignorance; and its ministers should ever be foremost as the patrons of knowledge. But it is evident that such a state of things requires their indomitable earnestness in the sacred duties of their calling, to secure for religion its due pre-eminence amidst all the various claimants upon the public attention. Allowing to general knowledge all the importance that is claimed for it, it is not, apart from religion, a sovereign remedy, a grand catholicon, which can heal the disorders, and restore the moral health of diseased humanity. There are some, and indeed not a few, in our own country, as well as upon the continent of Europe, who dream (and all history proves it to be but a dream), of regenerating the world by the principles of reason and the aid of secular education. They think they can regulate society without religion, and renew the heart of man without God. We might ask them what philosophy did for such purposes in Egypt its cradle, or in Greece its temple? They forget that by the permission of Providence a grand experiment was made in the latter country, during the five centuries next preceding the Christian era, by the sages of its schools, to see what knowledge, apart from Divine revelation, could do to reform the moral world, and make it virtuous and happy. We venture to call for the result, and if the advocates of reason refuse to give it, an apostle shall supply the answer: "The world by wisdom knew not God." Still more in point is his testimony in Rom. i, 28, 31. It would seem as if, not satisfied with a single demonstration, our modern philosophers were hazarding a second trial. Again with still greater advantages, and with still greater confidence, they are

flocking to the ordeal. Education is to be improved and extended; the press is pouring forth its cheap literature; science is broken down to such fragments, and measured out in such drops as even children's minds can receive and digest; and every appliance is to be furnished to give effect to the knowledge thus communicated; lecturers on all subjects are travelling through the country, and pouring forth streams of information in every direction; while rational and invigorating amusements are to come in to aid the general improvement. Those who believe in the sufficiency of knowledge alone to improve the taste and raise the morals of the nation, indulge in the largest expectations that society will be regenerated by these laborious efforts; but, without a prophet's eye, we may predict they are doomed to certain and bitter disappointment. We may confidently anticipate that the second experiment will have the same result as the first, and prove not only that the world by wisdom will never know God, but that nothing less than the foolishness of preaching will achieve its moral reformation. The state of our popular literature, as moulded to a considerable extent by these men, proves that the experiment of teaching mankind to do without religion, is going on. In much of what is read by the masses, there is unconcealed hostility to Christianity. Infidelity of the boldest and most daring kind is availing itself of many of the cheap publications of the day, with an energy and a success that would astound as well as alarm those who are not in the secret. But still many guides of the popular mind, perhaps most of them, would not patronize this open assault upon the foundations of our faith: they go a more insidious, though scarcely a less injurious way

to work; they act upon the principle that the best way to attack religion, and the least likely to shock prejudice and excite alarm, is to say nothing about it, to treat the whole subject as a negation, a nonentity, a thing to be forgotten, with which it is no part of their business to concern themselves, and which may be left to float quietly to the gulph of oblivion. In many cases false principles on the subject of revealed religion, are worked into the staple of scientific books, and many readers are made infidels almost before they are aware of the dreadful perversion. All that it is thought necessary to provide for the million in the way of reading, is amusement and general knowledge: and to a very great extent the object is accomplished. The labouring classes, with increasing knowledge, are more and more alienated from religion. The masses are not won to Christianity, but sullenly stand aloof from it, doubting whether it deserves their attention.

In such a state of things, what kind of ministry is it that is wanted? The answer is easy, men of earnestness; of earnest intellects, earnest hearts, earnest preaching, and earnest faith. Men whose understanding shall command respect, whose manner shall conciliate affection, and whose ministrations shall attract by their beauty, and command by their power. The accessibility of the labouring classes gives us an advantage in approaching them; neither prejudice nor fashion bars us out from them. We have neither to scale the walls of bigotry, nor to silence or evade the dogs of angry intolerance: the door is open, and we may walk in. But we must be men of the age, men who understand it; and who know how to avail ourselves

of its advantages, and to surmount its difficulties. But I cannot do better here than refer to an admirable article in the Eclectic Review, on the Modern Pulpit, the following extract from which is to the point.

"What is good preaching? Alas, how many answers would be given to this question! And yet is not the true answer, the preaching by which souls are saved? Then, the best preaching must be that by which the greatest number of souls are saved. In order to that end, however, men must be brought within the sphere of the pulpit; and to bring the greatest number of men within that sphere is the design of Dr. Vaughan in his treatise (on the Modern Pulpit), and it is ours. In one word, what we specifically want in the modern pulpit is, adaptation. Now we have read a good deal in our time, not more than enough, of the necessity of adapting the efforts of the pulpit to the constitution of the human mind, to man's moral nature, to his actual condition as fallen, guilty, wretched, and exposed to future punishment. And not seldom have we read most seasonable injunctions, addressed to our young ministers, on the personal adaptation of their discourses to the condition of individual men. All this we regard as of equal importance at all times, and in all conceivable circumstances. But at present our aim is to excite as much attention as we can to the truth, that along with these general and fixed adaptations, there is required a constantly varying adaptation to the constantly progressive changes of society."

The writer then goes on to explain what he means by this varying adaptation of the pulpit to the advancement in society, in reference to one portion of it, the working classes.

"Education is raising these great masses of the community into higher degrees of intellectual culture. New powers are at work. Incredible facilities are multiplied for diffusing knowledge, spreading opinions, and increasing the number of thinkers. Now in such an age, to say nothing of other views of society, it is obviously the duty of evangelical preachers to adapt themselves to the circumstances in which they are placed; not, [as this talented writer would be among the last to suggest,] by withdrawing from the pulpit the great themes of the mediatory system, and substituting for them philosophic truth, or a rationalised gospel; but by such a general line of conduct with reference to the circumstances of a growingly en-

lightened age, and such a strain of preaching as shall lay hold of the public mind, and bring it under that doctrine, which, and which only, is the power of God unto salvation. Let there be a just estimate formed, and which to be just cannot be a low one, of the mental powers of the common people; a judicious and hearty sympathy with their real wants and reasonable wishes; a studious consideration of the means by which the multitude shall be brought back to the sanctuaries of religion, which they have to a considerable extent deserted; an assiduous endeavour to connect the functions of the pastor with the literary cultivation of the people. For these purposes let there be correct information of their state of intellect, their prevailing habits, their peculiar temptations, their literary tendencies and aspirations as to the books they read; let there be all this, but then let it be only as so much power put forth to bring these masses under the influence of the gospel. Oh, it were a noble triumph of the modern pulpit, to see men of strong principle, and self-controlling wisdom, gathering round them the most boisterous elements of our social atmosphere, conducting the lightnings with which its darkest thunder-clouds are charged, and showing to the nation they have saved, that the preaching of the cross is still the 'Power of God.'"

Of course such an enterprise of home-evangelisation will require that our ministers shall be men of action. Adaptation, then, there may be, and should be, in the sermons and the general habits of the ministry, to the age in which they live, in the way of laying hold of public attention, widening the sphere of their action, and adding to their influence as preachers of the cross. Stronger intelligence, profounder thinking, more logical argumentation, more varied illustration, more chastened composition, more refined sentiment, more genuine philosophy, may be required in this, than in some preceding ages; but all must be in harmony with the simplicity that is in Christ, and must appear only so much added to the height or ornaments of a pedestal which is to exalt the Saviour, and not to exhibit an idol, however beautiful, in his place.

Having referred to the state of public opinion and

feeling with reference to religion among the lower classes, it may not be amiss to glance at the higher and more educated portions of the community. Many of these are moving in two lines, or in a stream that divides into two channels; and flows in two diverging directions; the devout and imaginative going off to Puseyism, and a large part of the rest to philosophical infidelity. Many of our men of letters have adopted a loose, unsystematised theism, which is in some cases a new edition of the opinions of our English deists of the last century; and in another, and a still more numerous class, bears a strong affinity to the pantheistic or mystic theory of the German philosophy. Of the disposition of modern science, in the persons of some of its more illustrious votaries, to retire from revealed religion, as if ashamed to be seen in its company, we have an affecting instance in the great octogenarian naturalist of Prussia. It is indeed a melancholy spectacle to witness such a man as Humboldt, whose eye has seen so much of the visible universe, and whose pen has recorded so ably the researches of his vast genius; whose intellect seemed formed by the Creator, not only to study his works but to proclaim his glories, send forth such a work as "Kosmos," and in that work declare it was no part of his business to trace the wonders he describes to their still more wondrous Author! How deeply painful to see this high priest of nature officiating with such zeal and devotion at the shrine of matter, and yet never throwing one grain of incense on the altar of the Infinite Mind which made the worlds! Yet this is only a specimen of other similar cases. Alas, alas, that such a mind should be so warped by the modes of thinking prevalent among

his countrymen, and should have sent forth perhaps his last gift to the lovers of science, with the Hegelian pantheism too obviously interwoven in it!

In such a view of the state and tendency of educated minds in this age, I see an additional argument for an earnest, and at the same time intelligent and educated ministry. We want men, and we are not without them already, who can enter the lists and do battle with the seductive and dangerous forms of error that have done such mischief on the continent of Europe, and are likely, without great vigilance and stout resistance, to repeat the mischief here also. The spirit of mental philosophy which was called up by Locke, and has since been sustained in different schools by Reid and Kant and those who have descended from them, is at the present moment widely diffusing itself through the English and American mind. Education will no longer be confined to literature and natural science. A disposition and determination are formed to explore the world of mind, as well as that of matter, and to give to subjective studies a place, and that a very high one, perhaps above the objective ones. Psychology is now the favorite pursuit of great multitudes of reflective intellects, and will be still more so. The mind of Germany is operating with power and success upon the mind of England, to an extent which is surprising, and in some views of the case alarming. It is, one should think, impossible to trace the progress of transcendentalism from the time of Kant to that of Hegel, and to see how, as it diverged more and more widely from the metaphysics of our own land, it has associated itself with rationalism in theology, and led on to pantheism in philosophy, and not feel some appre-

hension for the result of its introduction to this country. Perhaps the practical character of the English understanding will be one of our safeguards against a system which to the great multitude must ever remain a matter of mere scientific speculation. It may, however be feared that some of our young ministers, and our students in theology, especially those of speculative habits, captivated by the daring boldness, the intellectual vigour, and the theoretic attractions of the great German philosophers, may too adventurously launch forth on this dangerous ocean, and make shipwreck of their doctrinal simplicity, and practical usefulness. Let them be assured that neither the transcendentalism of Kant, nor the eclecticism of Cousin, is a safe guide for men who would be useful in saving souls. The warning voice has already been lifted up in high places on the other side of the Atlantic, where German philosophy was likely at one time to be received with avidity; and there will not be wanting voices to utter words of warning in this country also. It would not only be useless, but unwise to treat this, or any other system of philosophy, as the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which the command of God, and the flaming sword of the cherubim forbid us to approach: this, as well as every other object of human inquiry, may be studied, and by a cautious and discriminating mind, may be studied with advantage. I would by no means contend that there is nothing in the industry of German investigation, in its method of analysis, in its habit of considering everything subjectively; or even in the systems which are the fruits of its researches, which may not be borrowed with advantage by ourselves; but I

must raise my voice in emphatic protest against what I see manifested by some in this country, the willing and entire surrender of the understanding to a school, the masters of which have left us no gospel but a fable, and no God but Nature.

A work has lately made its appearance, which is likely to be extensively circulated among those who have any taste for philosophical studies, or any wish to become acquainted with German literature, and which cannot fail to command attention, and will certainly secure for its accomplished author the admiration and respect of his readers; I mean the "History of Modern Philosophy," by the Rev. J. D. Morell. It is impossible to deny that this gentleman unites to fidelity as an historian, the impartiality and candour of a true philosopher, and great ability as a writer. It is on some accounts a happy circumstance that such a subject has fallen into his hands, since Mr. Morell's attachment to evangelical truth, will qualify him, I trust, to be a safe pilot for the English mind through the perilous seas he has undertaken to navigate. It may be hoped that his own attachment to the subjective system of philosophy will not lead his ardent readers and admirers to go further in that direction than his own discriminating and well-balanced mind would wish or approve; and I am quite sure that he would join with many, who are perhaps more apprehensive than he is of the influence of German philosophy, in the opinion, that no more direct way can be taken by our young ministers to hinder their usefulness, than to allow such studies to obscure the simplicity of their matter, or to deaden the energy of their manner, as preachers of the gospel;

and I hope that he would also most emphatically say, "Beware lest any man spoil you (as preachers) through philosophy and vain deceit."

From a very able and complimentary critique on Mr Morell's work, contained in the twelfth number of the "North British Review," obviously by the late Dr. Chalmers, the following passage may with advantage be introduced here. Speaking of Carlyle, the reviewer says,

"They are not creeds, but men, who are the objects of his idolatry, which under the name of hero-worship, he renders alike to those of most opposite opinions, as to Luther, and Knox, and Cromwell, on the one hand, so with equal veneration to the lofty poets and transcendentalists of Germany, upon the other. He is a lover of earnestness, more than a lover of truth: and it would not be our counteractive at least to urge that he should be a lover of truth, more than a lover of earnestness. We should rather say that both are best; and would our island only not be frightened from its propriety by the high-sounding philosophy of the continent, neither overborne by its pretensions, nor overawed by its cabalistic nomenclature, would our savans and theologians but keep unmoved on the ground of common sense, and by their paramount demand for evidence at every step, lay resolute arrest on the pruriences of wanton speculation, then, while they rejected all that was unsubstantial and unsound in the dogmata of the transcendental school, it were well that they imported the earnest and lofty enthusiasm of its disciples into the phlegmatic universities, and no less phlegmatic churches of our land. We do not need to take down the frame-work of our existing orthodoxy, whether in theology or in science. All that we require is that it shall become an animated frame-work, by the breath of a new life being infused into it. Ours has been most truly denounced as an age of formalism: but to mend this, we do not need to exchange our formulas, only to quicken them; nor to quit the ground of our common sense for baseless speculations; nor to substitute the Divine Idea of Fichte for a personal and living God; nor to adopt for our Saviour a mere embodied and allegorised perfection, and give up the actual and historical Jesus Christ of the New Testament; nor finally, to go in quest of a chimerical ontology in upper regions far out of mortal

ken; and for visions of merest fancy there, to renounce either the certainties of our own palpable and peopled world, or the truths which He who dwelleth in the heavens brought down from heaven, because no man can ascend into heaven, or tell the mysteries and glories of a place which he never entered. What we want is, that the very system of doctrine which we now have, shall come to us not in word only, but in power. As things stand at present, our creeds and confessions have become effete, and the Bible a dead letter: and that orthodoxy which was at one time the glory, by withering into the inert and lifeless, is now the shame and the reproach of all our churches. If there have been the revival of a more spiritual philosophy in France, or elsewhere, it might well humble us; but this is not exactly the quarter from which we should expect our revival to come. Prayer could bring it down from above; and it is only thus that all which is good in Puritanism: its earnestness without its extravagance; its faith, without its contempt for philosophy; its high and heavenly-mindedness, without the baser admixture of its worldly politics and passions; it is only thus the Augustan age of Christianity in England, an age which Mr Carlyle has done so much to vindicate and bring to light, will again come back, to reform our State, and bless our families."

From this article it is perfectly evident that if England should have a tendency to go wrong, Scotland will do something to put us right, and that the followers of Reid, improving on their master, will do much to keep the disciples of Kant in check, and hold the balance even between the Scotch and German philosophies. Surely nothing more need be said to shew and prove what kind of men are wanted for such an age, and to indicate that for times of such excitement, we must have ministers of strong intelligence, simple faith, and entire devotedness. It is, in every view we can take of it, an earnest age, and earnest men alone can at such a time do anything anywhere, and least of all in the pulpit. Events, with trumpet-call, summon us to our post, with every faculty awake, and every energy engaged. Amidst the din of business, of poli-

ties, of science, and of fashion; amidst the jests of laughers, the eloquence of orators, and the clamour of parties, the voice of the preacher will not be heard, unless he speak loudly, nor be listened to unless he speak earnestly and intelligently; we shall gain no heed for our holy religion, unless we put forth all our strength; it will be pushed aside, overborne, trampled down in the jostling crowd, if we do not exert our mightiest energies to bear it up, and to make way for it through the throng and the strife of earnest secularities.

Let us not deceive ourselves by substituting any thing else for this. It may be all very well and proper in its place to keep pace with the times in which we live as regards other matters; in classical, mathematical, and philosophical literature, in academic degrees, in tasteful architecture; but these things, in the absence of a living power of intense devotedness, will be but as flowers to shed their fragrance upon our grave, or as sculpture to decorate our tomb.

IV. We may next contemplate the earnestness displayed by some other religious bodies, with which, it may be truly said, we have to compete, and in some instances to contend.

And first of all let us look at the activity of the Church of Rome. What a change has of late years come over that wonderful and dreadful system, so far as its external circumstances are concerned! Many are disposed to think lightly of its present condition, efforts, prospects, and hopes: and it will be acknowledged it is unwise and impolitic for Protestants to lend their aid in magnifying the power and swelling the pride and expectations of the Man of Sin. But it is no less unwise and impolitic on the other hand to mis-

calculate his forces, to shut our eyes to his efforts, and to deny his victories. What we need is just as much of alarm as shall rouse us to action, without producing panic; enough of fear to lead us to buckle on our armour, and yet not so much as to paralyse our energy. Look at the condition and prospects of Popery now, as compared with what they were soon after the French revolution. Weakened by the withering scorn of an infidel philosophy, to which its own corruption had given rise, it was ill-prepared to sustain the shock of that awful outbreak of human passion, and fell an apparently lifeless corpse before it. The Gallican church was subverted; its priests banished; its property confiscated; its places of worship closed. A French army was in possession of Rome, and the Pope a prisoner in France, while his adherents were trembling and dispersed in all parts of the world. The opponents of Romanism exulted in the confidence that its days were numbered, and its end was come. They exulted too soon. The lifeless corpse which then lay prostrate in Europe, has since then shown signs of returning animation, its wounds have been healed, it has risen from the earth, and recovering its full health, is going forth at this time with giant strength to contend with Protestantism for the mastery of the world. Popery has gained political power in England. It is renewing its old fight in France for the education of the people; its chapels, its priests, its bishops, its monks, its missions, are everywhere multiplying; its ancient craft and cruelty are again called into activity, as Tahiti can witness; it is drawing hundreds, if we include both clergy and laity, of influential persons from the Church of England, and tainting with its spirit hundreds more

who remain behind to diffuse the corruption still more widely; it has done much to blot from the memory of statesmen its past history, and to hide from their eyes its hideous form; and with an ardour kindling to an intense flame, and a hope flushed into a stronger confidence by these victories, it is still going on from conquering to conquer. Rome has however to set off against these bright signs portents as fearful and appalling, the confiscation of ecclesiastical property and the dissolution of monasteries in Spain; the rapid defection going on in Germany, under Rongé and Czerski; the conversion to Protestantism of whole congregations and parishes in the south of France; the rising spirit of free enquiry even in Italy; and the growth of knowledge and the advance of education everywhere. The great battle of the Reformation has to be fought over again, we are in the field of action, the forces are mustered and the conflict going on; and we are unworthy of the position and false to our vows if we do not give our best and noblest energies to the cause. Let us take pattern from our foes, and imitate their intensity of action. They are in earnest, if we are not. Were it possible for us to see a perfect disclosure, in one bird's-eye view, of all that is going on in the Vatican, that most astounding instance of centralisation out of the bottomless pit; could we see the gigantic intellects, burning hearts, and busy hands, that are working in that focus of all daring and mischievous attacks upon the world's intellectual and spiritual welfare, we should feel that we are safe from the tyranny of that audacious system, only under the vigilance of the Omniscient eye, and the protection of the Omnipotent arm. But that help and that vigilance are not to

be looked for by the supine and lukewarm, and can be expected only by zealous activity and confiding prayer.*

But this is not the only instance of earnestness which we should contemplate, and from which we should gain a stimulus for our own activity. The Church of England also is in earnest. Many of us can recollect the time when it was not so. A pervading secularity characterised her clergy; a drowsy indifference her people; if the former got their tithes, and ate, drank, and were merry; and the latter got christening, confirmation, and the sacrament when they died, it was all they cared for. The only thing that moved either of them to a pang of zeal, was the coming of the Methodists into the parish; and when they were mobbed away, they relapsed again into their former apathy. Exceptions there were, bright and blessed, but they were only exceptions. Thank God it is not so now. A vivifying wind has swept over the valley of dry bones, and an army not only of living, but of life-giving, men has sprung up. Venn, Berridge, and Romaine; Newton, Cecil, and Simeon, have lived and have awakened a new spirit in the church to which they belonged. Look at that church as she is now to be seen, full of energy and earnestness: divided it is true into parties, as to theological opinion; to a considerable extent Romanised in her spirit, and aggressive in her designs; but how instinct with life, and a great deal of it life of the best kind!

* Since these pages were written, what wondrous convulsions have shaken all, and revolutionized some, of the nations by which the Papacy is upheld. While I write, the seat of the Beast, the throne of Antichrist, is tottering. The Pope is a fugitive, Rome is in the hands of the people, and Italy itself likely to become the domain of liberty! What shall the end of these things be?

Even the Orthodox and the Puseyite clergy are all now active, preaching, catechising, visiting the sick, instituting and superintending schools. The day is happily gone by when the taunt of fox-hunting, play-going, ball-frequenting parsons, could be with justice thrown at the clergy of the State-church: they are now no longer to be found in those scenes of folly and vanity, but at the bed-side of the sick man, or in the cottage of the poor one. We must rejoice in their labours and in their success, except when their object and their aim are to crush Dissenters. There are very many among them of the true apostolic succession in doctrine, spirit, and devotedness: many whose piety and zeal we should do well to emulate: many to be united with whom in the bonds of private friendship and public co-operation, is among the felicities of my life. Sincerely and cordially attached to their church, they are labouring in season and out of season, to promote its interests. Who can blame them? Instead of this, let us imitate them. Their zeal and devotedness are worthy of it. I know their labonrs, and am astonished at them. Think of a clergyman, and multitudes of such there are, who, besides his other labours, spends four or five hours every day in going from house to house, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, comforting the distressed. Can we wonder that such men should lay hold on the public mind? Is it not in the natural course of things that it should be so? It is admitted that the clergyman of a parish has advantages for this species of ministerial occupation which we have not: he considers all the people within a certain topographical limit as belonging to him, as being in fact his cure; and most, if not all, of them, except such as by pro-

fession belong to other denominations, look upon him in the light of their minister. This ever active assiduity, in addition to the Lord's-day exercises, is admonitory to us. Can we see this new sight, the whole Church establishment, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the curate of the smallest village, with all their comprehensive agency of Pastoral Aid Societies, Ladies' District Visiting Societies, Scripture Readers, Church of England Tract Societies, and other means of influence and power, in busy commotion, dotting the land all over with churches and schools, and by all these efforts labouring so entirely to occupy the nation, as to leave no room for, and to prove there is no need of, any other body of Christians, can we have all this constantly before our eyes, and not see our need of an earnest ministry, not only if we would maintain our ground, but make any advance? Not that I mean to assert that the evangelical clergy would altogether wish to push us off the ground. I believe there are many who unfeignedly rejoice in the existence, operations, and success, both of the Methodists and Dissenters, and who would consider it a deep calamity for the nation if they were arrested in their career of evangelical ministration. The spirit of the Evangelical Alliance is diffusing itself abroad. Sectarianism is, I hope, beginning to wither at the root; and Christian charity is grappling with the demon of bigotry. But still we are at present not prepared for the fusion and amalgamation of all parties into one, and till then we may learn from each other; and with the most entire good will towards my brethren in the Church of England, without envy or jealousy, I call upon my other brethren, those within my own denomination, to imitate the zeal among the clergy of the Establish-

ment, of which they are witnesses. I am a Dissenter from conviction, as well as by education, and know not the lure which would induce me, or the suffering which would terrify me, to abandon my principles. I believe as I ever have believed, since I reflected upon the subject, that the Establishment of religion by the enactments of secular legislation, has no sanction from the New Testament, is a corruption of Christianity, and is injurious to its spirit; and I believe the time will come, when the same views will be entertained by all the genuine followers of Christ; hence I am, and ought to be, anxious, while I cultivate a spirit of brotherly love towards those who differ from me, to uphold, though without wrath malice or any uncharitableness, the denomination by which my conscientious opinions are embodied and expressed. Dissenters of England, and especially Dissenting ministers, I say therefore unto you, be in earnest; first of all, and chief of all, in attachment to the doctrines of evangelism, to the creed of Protestantism, to the great principles which God has employed in every age and country where true religion has had existence, to vitalise the dead, and purify the corrupt, world. Be it your prayer, your endeavour, your hallowed ambition, to possess a ministry of competent learning, and especially of soundly evangelical sentiment; a ministry which as regards their pulpit ministrations, shall be the power of God to the salvation of souls; a ministry which in the simplicity of their discourses and the intensity of their zeal, the fervour of their piety, and the all-comprehending extent of their labours, shall vie with the best specimens of the clergy of the Church of England. There is earnestness among them, and if we would not be swallowed up in the rising tide of their

zeal, let us meet it with a corresponding intensity. Let each minister, in his own separate and individual sphere of action, set himself to work, and put forth all his energies, without waiting for combination with others. Not that I speak against combination. We have far too little of it, and this is our weakness. In polity we are too independent, and should be vastly improved as regards our internal condition and our external influence, if we were more compact. But as to ministerial earnestness, we need not wait for others: each man can do what he wills, and may do much, though no other man did any thing. Ministerial activity, like Christian piety, is a matter of individual obligation, and no one is so dependent upon his neighbours, that he needs to halt till they are ready to march with him.

Nor is it necessary nor proper, advocate though I be of the Evangelical Alliance, that we should be silent as to our views of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom. As we are not to sacrifice love for truth, so neither are we to sacrifice truth for love, nor to throw away a smaller diamond of truth out of regard to a larger one. All truth must be held, as well as all love. I differ from some of my brethren in my views of certain confederations for the maintenance and spread of our Nonconformity, because I believe that whatever good they may do in one way, they do more harm in others; but I do not differ from them in my conviction that our principles ought, as a part of the New Testament, to be taught, and to be taught with earnestness. If true, they must be important, and if important at all, very important: subordinate I know, immeasurably so, to the doctrines whereby men are saved; but still of consequence. Provided the gross misrepresentation, the

exaggerated statement, the studied caricature, the uncharitable imputation, the withering sarcasm, the bitter irony, and the malevolent ridicule, be expunged from controversy, and there be as much of the delicacy of love, as there is of the firmness of truth, there can be no harm, but must be much good, not only in stating our own opinions, but in answering those who differ from us. All systems of church-polity derive their value and importance from their subserviency to the cause of evangelism. Church-of-Englandism or Dissent apart from this, is but as the pole without the healing serpent which it was erected to exhibit; and to be zealous about either, except as viewed in reference to the truth as it is in Jesus, is but like contending about the wood of the cross, to the neglect of the Saviour who was crucified upon it. How, then, are we to meet that abounding zeal which we ourselves perhaps have been in no small degree the occasion of awakening, but by a corresponding vigour of action? We cannot advance, nay we cannot keep our ground, without it. We have to contend against an energy which is astounding and all but overwhelming; and if this cannot move us to earnestness, nothing will.

V. This state of mind and action is within the reach of every minister of Christ.

Some men, from natural energy of character, may be more prone to, and better qualified for, this fervid and devoted zeal, than some others. They are of a more mercurial temperament than their phlegmatic brethren, who creep while they fly, and who require more stimulus to rouse them into activity than is necessary to keep the others at their full speed. This is constitutional to a very considerable extent; but it is

after all, more of a moral than a natural inability in many; and the sinners whom they address and call to repentance, and to whom they declare that the only hindrance they have to true religion is an impotence of will, are just as excusable for their want of penitence and faith, as any minister under heaven is for a want of earnestness. He may never be able to be a scholar, or a philosopher, or a mathematician, though he may acquire more of all these attainments than he supposes is within his reach, if he will but give himself to early rising, make a good apportionment of his time, and adopt a well-arranged plan of study. His situation and engagements may be such, however, that he may not hope to rise to eminence in these pursuits; but nothing forbids his activity, zeal, and entire devotedness to the great work of preaching the gospel, and caring for men's souls. He may not be a consummate orator, for perhaps he has not voice for this; but he may, if he pleases, use what voice he has with good effect; he may not have the ability required for finished composition; but he can, if he gives time and labour, produce sermons full of spiritual power: he may not be able to attract around him the rich, the literary, or the great; but he can interest the poor, and engage the children of the Sunday-school, and perhaps, their parents; he may not have ten talents, but he need not wrap up his one in a napkin and bury it in the earth. Every man has one talent at least, with which he can busily trade and acquire profit for his employer and reward for himself. If the pride of some men over-estimate the number of their talents, the modesty, or in some cases the indolence, of others, leads them to make too low a calculation of theirs. There is a source of latent energy in

most men, which they have been so far from exhausting, that they have scarcely opened it; they have in many cases to break up virgin soil. I knew a minister of Christ, and loved him well, who was in a situation where he had done little, and feared he never should do more. Every thing was dull around him, and he was dull with it. It pleased God to remove him to a new situation, and then he became a new man. He revived from his torpor, and every thing revived around him. He now evinced an activity and energy which surprised himself and those who knew him. He formed a new congregation, instituted a variety of religious organizations of a useful kind, and was one of the most earnest men I knew. All this energy was not a new creation, but a resurrection. So it might be with many other ministers. Principles of activity are within them, only waiting for the influence of circumstances, or their own will, to give them life, motion, and vigour. Away then with the excuses of indolence, the fears of timidity, the objections of modesty, and the opiates of conscience; for it is these which prevent a man from being zealously affected in a good thing. Every minister can be an earnest minister if he so wills: he is earnest when any thing in which he has a deep interest is at stake. Let his house be on fire, or his health or life be in danger, or his wife or child be in peril, or some means of greatly augmenting his property be thrown in his way, and what intensity of emotion and vehemence of action will be excited in him! He needs but the pressure upon his conscience of the interests of immortal souls; he needs but a heart so constrained by the love of Christ, as to be borne away by the force and impetuosity of that hallowed passion; he needs but a longing desire to be

wise in winning men to Jesus; he needs, in fine, but a heart fully set to accomplish the ends and objects of his office, to possess that high and noble quality of soul which it is the object of this work to recommend. There are the same constitutional varieties in tradesmen as in ministers, and yet we never hearken to the former, when in justification of their failure for want of energy, they tell us they have no physical capacity for, or tendency to, activity. Our reply to them is, that what is deficient in them by nature, must be made up by reason and resolution. I say the same to the preacher of the gospel, and while by the representation I would constrain his conscience by a sense of obligation, I would equally aim to interest his heart by awakening his hope. He may never with his measure of talent be able to reach the success of some more gifted and more favoured brethren; but he may have a measure of his own, far more than enough to recompense any labour he may bestow; and instead therefore of spending his time in envying others, or sitting down in despair and doing nothing, because he cannot do as much as they, let him rise up, and have the blessed consciousness and reward of doing what he could.

Young ministers of the gospel, and students preparing for the ministry, who may read these pages, you can possess and exhibit real earnestness; all its delightful excitement, all its blessed results, and all its eternal consequences, are within your reach. There is no lion in the street, except such as your own imagination sees there, and your own sloth has placed there. Make the effort, it is worth the making: try, you can but fail, and it is better to fail, than not to make the attempt. Think what a result may issue from new devotedness.

We have never yet any of us adequately estimated the immense importance and momentous consequences of our work. How can we? They are eternal, and who can duly estimate eternity? Do we believe what we preach, that the conversion of a soul is of more consequence than the creation of a world? Is this sober truth, or mere rhetoric? Is this fact, or the mere garniture of a sermon; only a dash of eloquence, an artifice of oratory? If true, and we know it is so, how momentous it is! A soul, weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary, and settle its worth; appraise its value. Salvation! wondrous word, and more wondrous thing. One word only, but containing millions of ideas; uttered in a moment, but requiring everlasting ages, and all the amplitude of heaven, for the unfolding of its meaning. Archbishop Williams, who was also Lord Keeper in the time of Charles the First, once uttered this memorable speech: "I have passed through many places of honour and trust both in Church and State, more than any one of my order for seventy years before; but were I assured, that by my preaching I had converted one soul to God, I should therein take more comfort than in all the honours and offices that have ever been bestowed upon me." What a confession from an archbishop, that he did not know he had been the instrument of converting a single soul to God; what importance does the confession stamp upon the work of saving souls; and what a stimulus should it supply to us who are engaged in this divine employment!

How vain and worthless a thing is the popular applause which some receive for their eloquence, compared with the proofs of usefulness in the conversion of immortal souls? What are the flatteries of the

foolish or even the eulogiums of the wise; what the honeyed compliments, or golden opinions of the most distinguished circle of admirers, weighed against the testimony of one redeemed sinner whom we have been the instrument of saving from death, but as the small dust in the balance! How have some men, pre-eminent for their intellectual might, and accustomed to fascinate the spell-bound multitude by the power of their eloquence, yearned amidst all their popularity for some more substantial, satisfying, and abiding reward of their labour, than that admiration of their talents, which they were accustomed to receive! They were not unsusceptible to the emotions of vanity, nor ungratified by the expressions of applause, at the time: but when they found that this was all the result of their labours, they sickened at the incense and the honey, and exclaimed in the bitterness of disappointment, and the anguish of self-reproach, "Is this all my reward? Oh, where are the souls I have converted from the error of their ways?" We have a striking proof of this in the late Dr. McAll, whom it was my privilege to call my friend. It was impossible for this extraordinary man to be ignorant either of his great powers, of the estimate in which they were held, or of the effect they produced on others by his pulpit exercises. Nor was he by any means unsusceptible of the influence of applause. But how empty did this appear to him as compared with the abiding results of real usefulness; which if he had not enjoyed in such large measures as some others, it was not for want of any anxiety to obtain it. "Deeply affected was he often," says Dr. Leifchild, "by the fear of not being useful in his ministry." "I have admiration enough," he would say, "but I want

to see conversion and edification." He spoke of some other neighbouring ministers, whose churches he said resembled a garden which the Lord had blessed, or whose spots of verdure were more vivid than his own; but added, that his emotions in making the comparison, partook of a character that absorbed or overwhelmed him with sorrow for himself. I remember on one occasion after a brilliant speech from himself he listened to a much plainer and less oratorical brother, whose address, however, seemed to be penetrating the minds of the audience, and produced on their countenances an appearance of being deeply affected. At that moment, the speaker hearing a loud sobbing behind him, turned round; it was McAll. "Ah," he said afterwards, "I would give the world to be able to produce that effect in such a legitimate way." Though the desire thus ardently breathed, was elicited on the platform, it extended to every description of ministerial address. "Oh," said he to Mr. Griffin, again and again, "I care nothing what the people may think or say of my abilities if I may but be useful to souls!" and once with a kind of swelling indignation, "God knows, I do not want their applause, I want their salvation." This is eminently instructive and impressive, and is one of the most convincing instances which the history of the pulpit can furnish of the worthlessness, compared with the salvation of immortal souls, of every object of ministerial pursuit, and every other reward of ministerial labour. This was not the confession and lamentation of one whose envy led him to depreciate the value of that which he had no hope of obtaining, but of one who was the admiration of every circle into which he entered, and whose surprising talents commanded the

plaudits of all who heard him. How much of the power of that vast intellect, of that splendid eloquence, and of the admiration and eulogium which they drew upon him, would Dr. McAll have given up for a portion of the usefulness, which he saw was granted to the humbler but more effective talents of some of his far less gifted brethren. Let the men who are but too apt to envy such displays of genius, and who, when they see the spell-bound multitude listening in breathless silence, or dispersing with audible applause, fret because they cannot do as much with their enchantments, study the scene before us: let them follow Dr. McAll home from the crowded, fascinated, admiring congregation, leaving behind him the atmosphere perfumed and vocal with the delight of his hearers, to commune with God and his own heart in his closet, and there hear him exclaiming with a burst of agony, "Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom has thine arm been revealed?" Let them mark all this, and learn that, in the estimation of the most gifted minds, there is no object of pursuit so sublime, and no reward for ministerial labour so rich, as the salvation of immortal souls.

VI. We may next direct our attention to the fact that earnestness has usually been successful in the accomplishment of its object, and that little has ever been achieved without it.

I admit, and in the conclusion of this work shall more emphatically state, the necessity of a Divine influence to convert the soul; but still the Spirit works by means, and by means best adapted to accomplish the proposed end. We do not look for the Spirit to convert souls without the truth; it is by the presenta-

tion of this to the judgment, and by the co-working of Divine grace upon the heart, that the great change of regeneration is effected. It is evident, however, that this blessed result can take place only in those cases where the truth is really contemplated. The attention must be fixed upon it, or no result can take place. Attention, and to a certain extent abstraction of mind, may be said to be essentially necessary to the work of conversion. Hence those preachers are not only likely to be most useful, but are most useful, who have the greatest power of fixing their own attention upon the truth, and holding the mind abstracted from all other topics. When the attention is by their manner of preaching withdrawn from foreign matters, and fixed upon the truth then presented, the Spirit in a way of sovereign mercy gives forth his influence to change the evil bias of the heart towards the truth thus exhibited. We perceive in different preachers very various kinds of power to engage the attention: some do it by their commanding eloquence; others by their impressive delivery; others by their burning ardour; others by their melting affection; and some even by their eccentricity; but amidst all these specific varieties of manner, we shall find power to arrest and fix the attention. A preacher may be immeasurably inferior to many others in the vigour of his intellect and richness of his imagination, and yet may be very far their superior in seizing and holding the minds of his hearers. We cannot hope to do good if we do not succeed in gaining the attention of our hearers, and our expectations of accomplishing the objects of our ministry may be indulged with much confidence, if we can so preach as to compel our hearers to listen to us. There is a striking incident mentioned

in the "Life and Remains" of Mr Cecil, of St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row, that master of pulpit eloquence. He was once invited to preach in a village, where the joyful sound of evangelical truth was rarely heard in the parish church, and where he thought it probable he should have no other opportunity to proclaim it. To his mortification, when he got half way through the sermon, he perceived that he had not succeeded in gaining that close attention of the people which he deemed essential to the success of his sermon. The time was going by, the case seemed desperate, and it occurred to him that something must be done, or the opportunity was lost; and pausing for a moment where the subject admitted of his trying his experiment, he said with some degree of that impressiveness which pertained to him, "Last Monday morning a man was hanged at Tyburn," and then went on to make the recent execution bear upon the subject of discourse. The expedient of course succeeded, the wandering eyes of the congregation were fixed upon the preacher, and their truant minds upon the sermon. He gained their attention, and it was rivetted to him throughout the remainder of the discourse. Such self-possession is a noble qualification for a public speaker: and the lesson taught by the anecdote is, that we must have the attention of our congregations, or we can do them no good; and that the more we command this, so as to lead them to think of the truth, the more likely we are to do them good. The history of all successful preachers will prove that amidst a vast variety of means of gaining attention, they each had the power of doing so, and in that power lay the secret of their success.

Let any one who is at all in doubt whether the im-

portance of earnestness is overstated in this work, consider who among departed ministers have been, and who among living ones are, the most distinguished as successful preachers of the word of God. If he apply this to the fathers and founders of Nonconformity, he will find that in the first rank stand Baxter, Bunyan, Doolittle, Clarkson, Flavel, Heywood, and Howe: and when he has read their glowing, pungent, and powerful appeals to the hearts and consciences of their hearers, he will not wonder that such sermons effected the high purpose for which all sermons should be preached, that is, the conversion of sinners. Coming on to latter times, it is unnecessary, after what has been said, to mention Whitfield and Wesley, except to reiterate that in addition to other high and nobler qualities, earnestness was the great means of their extensive success. They lived and laboured for scarcely any thing else than the salvation of immortal souls. As a proof of the intensity of their zeal, reference may be made to the race of men into whom they breathed the fervour of their own souls, and whom they raised up to carry on their own great work. With here and there an exception, the present race of Methodist and Dissenting ministers are stiff, formal, cold-hearted men, compared with not only the leaders, but the immediate followers of those illustrious instruments of the modern revival of evangelical religion. How few of us are worthy to be mentioned with Coke and Fletcher, Rowland Hill, Berridge, and Grimshaw; with Cecil, Newton, and Romaine. What men were raised up in Wales by the Whitfield movement, Daniel Rowland, Jones of Llangan, Howell Harris, and their successors, John Elias, Christmas Evans, and Williams of the Wern; men who

caused the mountains of their romantic country to echo to their mighty voices, and who filled its vallies with the fruits of their impassioned oratory! If we look across the Atlantic, what a wonderful man do we discover in Jonathan Edwards, whose printed sermons, which were only in accordance with his ordinary ministry, are full of such earnestness as he exhibited in the specimen given earlier in this work, and whose ministry was so full of its successful results. Call to recollection Stoddard, Bellamy, Dwight, Davies, who in the land of the pilgrim fathers diffused abroad by their unreserved devotedness the savour of that Name which is above every name. In Scotland there have been the Erskines, the McLaurins, the Walkers, the Dicksons, and others of bygone days, whose remains tell us how they handled the word of God, and whose memoirs inform us of their success. In these venerated men we see the secret of all ministerial power; desire amounting to fervour for the conversion of sinners, and adaptation in their preaching to accomplish it.

If the illustrious company of reformers, who next to the apostles, present the most august examples of burning zeal, be not referred to, if the majestic and mighty Luther, the profound Calvin, the heroic Zuingle, the intrepid Knox, the elegant and classic Melancthon, are passed over, it is not only because they are too well-known to need a mention, but also because they may be thought too high above the ordinary sphere of ministerial activity to be imitated: and yet if the pattern of the great Master himself is placed before us for contemplation and imitation, surely that of the most renowned of his servants need not be withheld. What singleness of aim, unity of purpose, and concentration of energy,

were there in those rare and extraordinary men, and what less could have carried them on and through their noble career!

Descending to others, what men have been with us in the recollection of the present generation; the horizon has scarcely even yet ceased to glow with their radiance; the original and striking Fuller, the mighty Hall, the seraphic Pearce, and the lion-hearted Knibb; the intellectual Watson, and the masculine Bogue; the eccentric yet generous Wilks, the judicious Roby, the mild yet persuasive Burder, the pathetic Waugh, the wise and tender Griffin, the captivating and lovely Spencer, and the eloquent McAll. Honoured be their names, fragrant their memories, and precious the recollection of their example! May we who survive cherish the recollection of their life and labours, and never forget that their greatness and their usefulness arose not more from their talents, than from their devoted earnestness in the cause of evangelical truth.

But coming to other and living examples, more upon the ordinary level, it may be well to look around upon those by whom in our own day, and before our own eyes, the ends of the Christian ministry and the object of evangelical preaching are most extensively accomplished, and to inquire by what order of means this has been done. It would be invidious to mention the names of living men, and to select from among the multitude those who are pre-eminent above their fellows in usefulness, in popularity, and in the constant exhibition of evangelical truth. Two names, however, may here obtain a place, honoured by us all, and an honour to us; the names of men widely differing, yet of equally conspicuous and acknowledged excellences,

who are too far above us to excite our envy, and whose celebrity will defend this willing, affectionate, and admiring testimony, from the charge of invidious selection or fulsome adulation; and who, each in his own sphere, one in the northern and the other in the southern hemisphere, is shedding the lustre of an evening star, and reflecting upon the church the glory of that great Sun of Righteousness, in whose attraction it has been his delight through a long, and holy, and useful life, to revolve: who yet live, and long may they live, that our younger ministry may learn in the holy labours of Chalmers* and Jay, how beautiful and how useful is human genius when sanctified by grace, and devoted to an earnest preaching of the gospel of salvation.

But we are not considering now what may be done, and is done, by the gifted few, who by their rare

* Alas, that so soon after this paragraph was penned, one of these venerated names should be expunged from the record of living men, and added to the list of the illustrious dead! Yes, the mighty Chalmers is gone; and to quote the apostrophe of Hebrew poetry, selected by Mr Jay as his funeral text for Rowland Hill, we may utter the wail and exclaim, "Howl, fir tree, the cedar has fallen!" The very glory and pride of Lebanon has fallen, and every one who surveys the gap which his removal has made in the forest, feels that there is no source of consolation under such a bereavement, but that which is supplied by the consideration that the Lord lives. It is beyond my ability to describe or to eulogise this wonderful man, whose death has clothed the whole church of God in mourning; I would therefore only say that ever since his vast intellect was irradiated by the light of truth, and his noble heart was brought by faith under the constraint of love to Christ, he has exhibited one of the finest specimens of the character I have attempted to delineate in this volume; so that every student of divinity in our colleges, and every minister of every denomination, may be directed to Dr. Chalmers, as one of the most beautiful types and models of an Earnest Minister. Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander's funeral sermon, which contains an admirable analysis of his mind and character, will well repay perusal.

endowments are fitted, and designed, to enrich our theological literature by their valuable works, or to gather around our pulpits the literary or philosophical spirits of the place in which they dwell; they are the exceptions in all denominations to the general rule of preachers, even as those who listen to them are the exceptions to the general rule of hearers. Our remarks apply to the men who move the masses, who operate upon the popular mind as it is most commonly found; and what are they? not men of high scholarship, profound philosophy, or elegant composition; but men of energy and earnestness, men laying themselves out for usefulness, men of business and of tact in the management of their fellow-men, men of heart, of feeling, and perseverance. Where is a large congregation, a flourishing, well-compacted church to be found? There is an earnest man. Where, in what country, or in what denomination, does one such man labour without considerable success? Where has the faithful, devoted, energetic preacher of evangelical truth, to use in a figurative sense the words of the Lord's forerunner, had to say, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness?" Where do we find small congregations, dissatisfied or declining churches, and empty chapels? Where do the ways of Zion mourn, and her gates languish, because none come to her solemn feasts? Certainly not where the ministers are as flames of fire. No matter where, or under what discouraging circumstances, one of these sacred flames may commence his labours, he will soon draw around him a deeply interested and attentive congregation; no matter what may be the denomination with which he may be associated, he will not only excite the indif-

ference, or subdue the prejudice, by which he is surrounded, but will awaken interest and conciliate regard. Under the magic power of his devotedness, blessed as it will be by God the Spirit, the verdure and beauty of spring will succeed to the gloom, desolation, and sterility of winter, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for him, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. In some cases the change has been as sudden and as complete as in Russia, from frosts and snows to flowers and fragrance: churches that seemed only the repositories of the dead, and places for monuments and epitaphs, have become crowded with living and listening hearers of the joyful sound: and chapels once far too large for the last remains of a former congregation, have been soon found too small for the new one that has filled up its place.

It would be no unprofitable exercise for any one to look round upon some of our most successful ministers, and after surveying the extent of their usefulness, to say to himself, "How has that man done this? What have been the means by which, under God, he has accomplished so much?" Unhappily there are a few, perhaps, who are so enamoured of what is literary, intellectual, or philosophical, that even in great ministerial success, they see little to admire or to covet, if it be not associated with scholarship and science. This is a bad state of mind, indicates a worse state of heart, and proves that the man who is the subject of it, has totally mistaken the end of the ministerial office. Some of our most useful preachers are far more conscious of their deficiencies in literature and philosophy than these supercilious scholars may imagine, and would purchase, at almost any cost, if they could be ob-

tained, by money, the attainments which their limited education never enabled them to acquire; but at the same time they would not give up their usefulness for all the literature of Greece and Rome, with all mathematics and philosophy in addition: and amidst their deficiencies in all that would give them weight and influence in the world of letters, they feel adoringly thankful for all that other kind of weight and influence which they have acquired in the church. Their labours in the pulpit have gained them an acceptance which is far more surprising to themselves than it can be to others. Peradventure also, they may have launched on the sea of authorship, and have had a prosperous course, where many expected they must soon make shipwreck. None can be more sensible than themselves of defects in their compositions, and often they have been ready to blame their presumption in taking up their pen, and to resolve to lay it down for ever; when perhaps some instance of usefulness has come to their knowledge, as if to reprove their vanity, wounded by a sense of their own deficiencies, and to make them thank God, and take courage. They knew their own department of literary action, and aimed at nothing higher than to be useful; willing to bear the sneer of literary pride, and endure the lash of critical severity, so that they might accomplish the only objects of their ambition, the salvation of immortal souls, and the establishment of believers in their holy faith. Such men there are among us, who owe their success not to a finished education, for it was their misfortune not to enjoy this precious advantage to the extent to which it is now carried; nor to high scholarship, to which they make no pretensions, but to an

intense desire to be useful, and to something of earnestness in carrying out the desires of their hearts. In addition to the direct usefulness of their labours, they may be useful in another way, by showing that where great literary acquisitions have been precluded, still simple earnestness without them, may be blessed of God for accomplishing in no inconsiderable extent the great ends of the Christian ministry.

It has been said, in reference to secular matters, that a man who has decision of character enough to make up his mind to be rich; who has a measure of talent to uphold his resolution; and a rigid system of self-denying economy, will ordinarily succeed: and observation seems to support the remark. With far greater certainty may it be said, that he who enters upon his ministry with an intense zeal for God; an ardent passion for the salvation of souls; a well sustained, deep piety, a tolerable share of talents and acquirements; and a fixed purpose in humble dependence upon God's grace, to be a useful minister of Christ, will not fail of his end. The failure of such a man would be a new thing in the earth. I know of no such case, and I do not expect to meet with one. In dealing with sinners and calling them to repentance, we tell each, he may be saved if he will: not intending by such an expression that he can be saved without the Spirit of God; but that he may secure that Divine power if he have faith to receive it: so we may also venture to say to every minister of Christ, it is his own fault if he is not useful; intending by such an assertion, that as the gospel he preaches is God's own truth; as preaching is his own institute; as the minister is his own servant; and as He has promised that his grace shall be added to them, it

would seem as if in the case of entire or extensive failure, a minister has himself only to blame.

But we may look at the power of earnestness, as seen in the cause of error as well as in that of truth. It has as often served a bad cause as it has a good one. Islamism owes its existence and its wide dominion to this quality in its extraordinary founder. Mohammed exhibits one of the most wonderful instances of this quality the world ever witnessed; and with what dreadful results was it followed in his case! We may say the same of Popery; that stupendous fabric of delusion, which throws its dark and chilling shadow over so large a portion of Christendom, owes its erection and its continuance to the intense devotedness with which it has inspired its votaries: it is this that upholds a system constantly at war with the dictates of reason, the doctrines of revelation, and the dearest rights and liberties of humanity. It is the mysterious and indomitable earnestness of its priesthood, which has resisted the attacks of logic rhetoric and piety, of divines philosophers and statesmen, of wit humour and ridicule; and which, in this age of learning, science, commerce and liberty, enables it not only to maintain its ground, but to advance and make conquests. The Church of Rome, which would in the hands of a lukewarm priesthood fall by the weight of its own absurdity, or be crushed by the hands of its constant assailants, is still strong in the hearts of its members: because each of them from the Pope down, through all its civil and ecclesiastical gradations, to its most insignificant member, is a type of concentrated and intensely glowing zeal.

The pages of ecclesiastical history furnish us with

extraordinary instances of the power of the pulpit, in the sermons of some Popish preachers. I do not now refer to the court of Louis the Fourteenth, which, with that imperious and licentious monarch at its head, was subdued into a transient frame and season of devoutness, by the sermons of Massillon, but to the preaching of far inferior and less known orators; and to effects less courtly, but not less striking. When Connecte, an Italian, preached, the ladies committed their gay dresses by hundreds to the flames. When Narni in Lent, taught the populace from the pulpits of Rome, half the city went from his sermons, crying along the streets, "Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us!" and in one passion week, two thousand crowns' worth of ropes were sold to make scourges; and when he preached before the Pope, to cardinals and bishops, and painted the crime of non-residence in its true colours, he frightened thirty or forty bishops, who heard him, instantly to their own dioceses. When he preached at Salamanca, he induced eight hundred students to quit all worldly prospects of honour, riches, and pleasure, and to become penitents in divers monasteries; and some of them eventually became martyrs. Such was the power of earnestness; but being devoted in this case to the cause of error, being directed rather to the imagination than to the heart, and intended to correct mere ceremonial irregularities, rather than to lead to repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we are not surprised that the storm of passion soon subsided; that Narni himself was so disgusted with his office, that he renounced preaching and shut himself up in his cell, to mourn over his irreclaimable contemporaries; for bishops went back to

court, and rope makers lay idle again. This striking fact is replete with instruction, not only as showing the power of the pulpit, but also the essential feebleness of that religion which does not aim at the renovation of the heart, and the transient nature of that effect which is produced by mere rhetoric, unaccompanied by a sober exhibition of the truth to enlighten the judgment, to warm the affections, and to awaken the conscience.

But it is not only on this grand scale that we see the power and success of ardent zeal, even in a bad cause; for there is no system of opinions, and no course of religious practice, however remote, not only from the truth of revelation but from the dictates of common sense, and even the decorum of society, but if preached and propagated by men of intense ardour, will gain for a while disciples to believe it, and apostles to propagate it. If men are really in earnest in blowing bubbles, some will be found to look at, admire, and follow them. I have already said that earnestness is contagious: a man in this state of mind and action is sure to draw some others under the influence of his own example. If this is the case with a bad cause, how much more may we expect it to be so in a good one! Every thing then combines to prove that our want of success must be traced up rather to our neglect of the right means to obtain it, than to any backwardness on the part of God to give his blessing to intelligent, judicious, and earnest exertions.

Surely, surely, there must be, I repeat, a latent power in the evangelical pulpit, viewed as a moral and well adapted means of impression, which has not, except by Whitfield and a few others, been studied, discovered, and applied. Surely if we had more intense piety,

stronger faith, more knowledge of the human heart, more anxiety to obtain an impressive elocution, more ardent longings after the conversion of sinners, we could and should by God's grace move and command the masses. There is, there must be, neglected power somewhere.

VII. The state of our denomination demands immediate and devoted attention to the subject.

In speaking of our own denomination, I find in its general condition much cause for thankfulness and congratulation. In the number of our churches and the competency of a very large number of their pastors; in our colleges and schools; in our missionary and other organizations; in our periodical and other religious literature; in our public spirit and liberality, I see signs of prosperity, and tokens for good: and if we are true to ourselves and to our cause, we have nothing to fear. Our opponents cannot do us so much harm as we may do ourselves. With a system of doctrine which we believe is taken from the New Testament, and a system of polity which in all its general principles is derived from the same source, we may not only stand our ground, but advance, if we will present the former in all its fulness, and administer the latter with discretion and charity. Every thing, under God's blessing, depends upon our ministry. This, which is important to every denomination, is especially so to ours. We go forth not only unsupported by the wealth, power, and fashionableness of the Established Church, but without the aid of that elaborately organized combination which is to be found in some sections that separate from it. Our ministers, so to speak, do not contend in regiments formed in rank and file, but single handed, and should

therefore be all picked men, each possessed of courage and of skill. Let us only take care to send none but such into the field, and we may hope for a still more abundant measure of prosperity than we at present enjoy.

There is room enough for all denominations in the vast wilderness of our neglected and unchristianized population, and we have no need to look at each other's labours with jealousy and envy. Satan is ruining souls faster than all of us united can save them. It is a mark of deep malignity of heart, and a proof that it is the distempered zeal of bigotry, and not pure love to God and souls, that moves us, when we see with uneasiness the success of other denominations of evangelical Christians, and rejoice over their failure. To seize with avidity any acknowledgments of, and lamentations over, a want of usefulness, and then tearing them from their connexion and exaggerating their statements, to hold them up exultingly to the world, and tauntingly to the denomination from which in frankness and in sorrow they have come, may suit well with the strategy of polemical warfare, and serve the cause of a party, but ill accords with the spirit of divine charity, and cannot promote the interests of our common Christianity. In many places of worship connected with the Establishment, even where the gospel is preached, but preached with feebleness, we find small congregations, and few souls converted to God. Do we rejoice over this? On the contrary, it is a grief and a lamentation. And is there a heart so envenomed with the gall of bigotry, as to rejoice in the confession now made, that many of our congregations are withering away under the effete ministrations of incompetent men? Such a withering

is indeed going on in many places. The fact cannot be concealed, it is notorious. We have been incautious in the admission, not of bad men, for few of these ever find their way into our pulpits; not of heretical men, for we take care not to receive such; but of incompetent men: not always incompetent in intellect, but in talents for public speaking and the active duties of the pastorate. From this cause, combined with the increased energy and activity of the Church of England, our congregations are diminishing in some places, though multiplying and increasing in others. With the freedom of action we possess, unrestricted by parochial limits and ecclesiastical laws; with the world all before us, and Providence our guide; with a good feeling towards us on the part of the middle and lower classes, we have every ground to hope for success, if we can obtain an adequate number of energetic and earnest preachers; but we have not taken sufficient care to find out and educate the right sort of men, and in some places are certainly losing ground. Considerable towns might be mentioned where congregations once numerous and flourishing, are reduced down to mere skeletons, under the dull and deadening influence of feeble, yet good men. It is more easy to settle an incompetent minister over a church than to remove him. It is true we have advantages for such removal not possessed by the Church of England. The pastorate is not in our churches a freehold; yet it must be confessed that even with us, the difficulty of getting rid of a pastor, except for immorality or heresy, and only on the ground of inefficiency, is not small. That a minister should wish to stay when he has preached away nearly all his congregation, breeds a suspicion of the purity of his motives, and is a reflection

upon the integrity of his character. To reduce a congregation and scatter a church, first by inefficiency, and then by obstinacy in retaining the post in opposition to the wishes of the flock, and the advice of friends, is a serious matter to account for to God. Some such men talk of waiting for the leadings of Providence. One is at a loss to find out what rule of interpretation for ascertaining the will of God they have adopted: to every body else but themselves, deserted pews and a dissatisfied as well as a reduced church, are a sufficient indication that Providence is leading to their removal. In such a case one should suppose there needed no voice from heaven to say to the minister, "Arise, and go hence;" nor any finger to come forth, and write "Ichabod" in flaming characters on the walls. It is sometimes said that the people must suffer the consequences of a hasty choice: and so far as they are concerned, they deserve it; but they suffer not alone, for the denomination suffers with them in its strength, character, and efficiency. The work of conversion, not only in our own denomination, but in the Church of England, and among the Methodists, goes on but slowly, and the spirituality of the great bulk of professors is too low. This is confessed and lamented by the Evangelical clergy, and by the Wesleyan ministers, as well as by ourselves. The Spirit's influence seems in some way and from some cause obstructed: and in the absence of this, our denomination is more likely to feel and manifest the visible results of it than almost any other; and such a consideration should lead us to more serious thoughtfulness and earnest prayer for a revived and intensely devoted ministry.

CHAPTER X.

THE MEANS OF OBTAINING AN EARNEST MINISTRY.

This is a most important part of my subject: for however desirable the blessing may be, yet if it cannot be obtained, or if there are no means by which we can obtain it, the discussion and contemplation of it are useless, and even worse, being calculated only to excite a fruitless wish, or what is most injurious of all, a disposition to neglect the means we have. But we are not to entertain so desponding a view. Men there have been, and blessed be God, men there are, and that in no small number, in every section of the Christian church, labouring with intelligence, zeal, and success, both in the metropolis and in the provinces; men of whom their age need not be ashamed, and over whom any age would have rejoiced. Still there are too many of an opposite character; far too many, to render the question impertinent and out of season, "How shall such a ministry be obtained?"

I. It is imperative first of all to have the truth deeply engraven upon all hearts, that the church is the conservator of the christian ministry, and that it is her business, and almost her first and most important business, to see that she discharges well her duty in this momentous affair. She has at the present time, not

only to provide for her own edification, but also to secure, by all possible vigilance and care, the administrative transmission of our holy religion through following ages, pure, undefiled, and unimpaired in its capacity to confer essential and eternal benefits upon the children of men. But it is obvious that for such a function the church must be regarded as a purely spiritual body. And it should be deemed a question of no small moment, bearing as it does upon the controversy about church government, what system of polity has the most direct tendency and the greatest power to call out, secure, and perpetuate an evangelical and effective ministry. An ecclesiastical system which of itself has no effectual provision for this, cannot surely be of Divine origin, and that which has the most obvious and direct tendency to this, is most in accordance with the Word of God. A church without such a conservative principle cannot be the church of the New Testament, much less that which includes various and ever active influences against it. Nothing but a spiritual church can provide a spiritual ministry, and any spiritual ministry which a worldly church may have cannot be so much the result of the system, as of something extraneous to it. Even in spiritual churches, if discipline be relaxed, and worldly-minded persons be admitted, the conservative principle, the vital piety of the members, is impaired; and if at the same time there be neglect of discipline, it will be altogether lost, and heretical men come in to fill the places of those who were the preachers of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is well, therefore, for all our churches to bear in constant recollection, this their high and sacred function as conservators of an evangelical ministry; and to

maintain that vital godliness, and that wholesome discipline, in which alone this power of conservation resides. Let the churches consider their high, their glorious commission: let them remember they must be such, that the Christian truth, both as to doctrine and practice, and the calling out and supporting fit men to uphold and preach it, may be safely trusted to their vigilance and care. But let them forget this and corrupt their fellowship by the admission of worldly-minded professors, and "the mounds are gone, the fence is broken up, and wolves may enter in, not sparing the flock." "Preserve this spiritual condition of the church, and it is what it was intended it should be, an undying torch, which, while it is the light of the present age, shall safely light successive ages along the only way which leads to happiness and heaven."

II. Let the subject be thoroughly considered, and universally admitted, that this is the ministry we want, and must have. In an age like the present, when so much is said about knowledge, and such high value is attached to it, there is a danger of our being seduced from every other qualification, and taken up with this. The establishment of the London University, and the incorporation of our Colleges with it, have given our students access to academic degrees and honours: and there is some danger in the new condition of our literary Institutions, lest our young men should have their minds in some measure drawn away from much more important matters, by the hope of having their names graced by the marks of a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. It is a foolish clamour that has been raised against all attention to such matters, and it is a vain and barbarous precaution that would fortify the minis-

terial devotedness of our students, by restraining them altogether from such distinctions. The studies necessary to enable them to attain this object of their ambition, are a part of their professional education; while the vanity likely to be engendered by success will soon be annihilated by the commonness of the acquisition. When these degrees are so common that almost all ministers possess them, they will no longer be a snare to their possessors. Besides, like every other object of human desire, when once they are possessed, much of the charm that dazzled the eye of hope has vanished. Henry Martyn, when he came from the senate-house at Cambridge, where he had been declared Senior Wrangler of his year, and had thus won the richest honour the University had to confer, was struck with the vanity of human wishes, and expressed his surprise at the comparative worthlessness of the bauble he had gained, and the shadow he had grasped. It is not by closing the door against such distinctions that we can hope to raise the tone of devotedness in our ministry, but by fostering in the minds of our young men at College, and in the minds of our congregations, and our ministers in general, the conviction that earnestness is just that one thing, to which all other things must be, and can be, made subservient, and without which all other things which education can impart are as nothing.

Our congregations need perhaps a little instruction on this subject. I am afraid their taste is not quite so pure, correct, and elevated on this matter, as it should be. There is, it is true, a demand for a vivacious and animated manner of preaching, and it is well there should be such; and provided it be intellectual, there is a decided preference for its being evangelical also; but

there is reason to fear that in some cases a small modicum of evangelical truth would do, provided there was abundance of talent. Earnestness is demanded, but with some, it is rather the earnestness of the head, than of the heart; the laboured and eloquent effusion of the scholar, philosopher, or poet, rather than the gush of hallowed feeling of him who watches for souls, as one that must give account. Dulness, however learned or profound, will not do, but the heartless declamations of the pulpit orator will do for some, though it have little tendency to do any thing more than please the intellect or captivate the imagination. There is in this day an idolatry of talent running through society; and this man-worship has crept into the church, and corrupted its members. It is painful to perceive how far it is carried in many circles, and to see what homage is paid, and what incense is burnt, to their favourites. It is not religion or holiness that is thus elevated, but genius and knowledge: it is not moral beauty, but intellectual strength, that is lauded to the skies: the loftiest models of goodness receive but scanty offerings at their shrine, compared with the gods of the understanding. It is very evident that in many cases the gospel is loved, if loved at all, for the sake of the talent with which it is preached, and not the talent for the sake of the gospel. Even the village tyro begins to talk about intellectual preachers. The fact however is admonitory, and shows that imbeciles, however holy, will not do, even in rural districts, in these days. There can be no surer mark of man's moral apostacy, his lapse from the innocence which he had when he came from the hands of his Creator perfect and in the moral image of God, than this disposition to exalt genius above piety.

What an inversion is it of the right order of things, since it must be allowed that man's intellect is not the highest part of his nature. It is by his capacity for virtue and religion that he is removed to the greatest distance from the brute creation, is placed in most direct opposition to fallen spirits, makes his nearest approach to the angels of God, and in any degree resembles the Holy and Eternal One. The God of the Bible is not merely a Divine Intellect, though his understanding is infinite; nor is Omniscience his only attribute, though it is one of his glorious perfections; but God is Love; and when the seraphim select for the subject of their anthem that view of his nature which calls forth their loftiest praise, they contemplate him as the Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. Infinite goodness, and not merely infinite greatness, is the Deity we are called by the inspired writers to worship; and the most sublime descriptions of God, not based upon his goodness, are but the inventions of men, and no true copies of God's representations of his own nature. The prevailing disposition, therefore, to do such homage to talent, rather than to moral excellence, is only another species of idolatry, more refined and subtle than the worship of stocks and stones, but scarcely less guilty.

That some respect must be paid to talent, even in the ministry of the word, is admitted; a disposition to prize it is inseparable from human nature, and is a part of the design of God in forming men with varying powers of the understanding: a fine intellect is to be admired as well as an elegant form or a beautiful flower; and so much the more, as that which is mental is superior to that which is corporeal. But when the Christian public is so enamoured of talent, as to admire it more than the

message which it is employed to set forth; when no preacher can be heard with pleasure or even endurance, however sound his doctrine, clear his statements, impressive his manner, or earnest his address, unless his discourse is radiant with the light of genius, and gay with the flowers of rhetoric; when truth itself is unpalatable unless it is sweetened with the honey of human eloquence, and even error so sweetened is swallowed for the sake of its luscious accompaniment; when the hearer of a sermon turns from it with disgust, because it fails to regale his fancy by the brilliancy of its images, or to lull his ear by the smoothness and harmony of its periods; when this is the state of the public taste, and it is to be feared that to a great extent it is the state of it now, surely it is time to call the attention of our congregations to something higher and better.

No one who is attentive to the distinguishing features of the age, can doubt that much is now going on which has an obvious, though of course an undesigned, tendency to corrupt in some degree the simplicity of the public taste with reference to preachers and their sermons. The pulpit has some reason to be jealous of the platform, and the sermon of the speech. If the modern practice of endless speechifying had only done something to break down the stiffness and formality of sermonic speaking, and to introduce a more easy, fluent, and energetic method of address on the part of the preacher, and a corresponding taste for a more vivacious method of instruction on the part of the people, it would have conferred a substantial benefit; but with it has come perhaps the opposite evil of making the preacher too oratorical, and the people too fastidious; and of destroying somewhat of the solem-

nity and spirituality of both. No doubt some degree of earnestness will still be observed, but it may be the earnestness which is anxious to please, rather than that which is desirous to convert; which aims to gratify the fancy rather than to save the soul.

It is in vain then to hope for such a ministry as that which it is the object of this work to describe and to recommend, till our congregations are brought to see its vast importance, and to supplicate that it may be given them. In this case, as in every other, the demand will bring the supply, as well as the supply create the demand. When the churches shall be brought up to that state of piety, that deep solicitude about salvation, that intenseness of pursuit of eternal life, which shall make them anxious to have ministers who will aid them in the momentous business; and when they shall say to the tutors and committees of our colleges, "You must not only send us learned men, but earnest men," then will the minds of our excellent professors be still more fixed on the most essential qualifications of the Christian ministry, and still more anxiously endeavour to meet this demand. And when our destitute congregations shall let it be distinctly known that it is not merely a Master of Arts, nor a merely eloquent speaker, nor even a good divine that they want, but one who shall watch for their souls, and feed the flock of God, then the attention of our young ministers will be still more turned to the end of their ministry, and the qualifications necessary for the just discharge of its functions. Let the church therefore only be rightly instructed on this subject, and fix properly its standard; let it be brought up to the conviction, that only men intent upon

saving souls, will be useful, and such men will come at its bidding.

III. There should be much prayer presented to God for a supply of earnest ministers. It must never be forgotten that ministers are called, qualified, and blessed, by the Lord, the Spirit. Hence the promise of God to the Jews, "I will give you pastors according to mine own heart; which shall feed you with knowledge and with understanding." And hence also the language of the apostle, "He gave some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." It was a special injunction of Christ to his disciples, but intended to apply to his people in every age, to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into the field. From these passages, as well as from the general principle that every good gift is from the Lord, we learn that a faithful ministry is one of God's gifts, and a precious one it is; and were the church in a high spiritual state, it would constitute one of the chief subjects of its prayers. Perhaps we are not brought to feel with sufficient depth of conviction our dependence upon God for this great blessing, for there is little doubt that the church's prayers and the church's possessions would bear in this particular some tolerable proportion to each other. We cannot conceive of any case in which the promise, "Ask, and ye shall receive," would be so abundantly fulfilled, as in reference to this. It has not been enough considered what kind of men are wanted at all times, and especially in these, for the ministry of reconciliation; that in fact we need men formed exactly and in all respects, except

inspiration and the power to work miracles, upon the apostolical model. Much the same work is now to be done as was done by them, and we must have men as full of the power of God, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, to do it. Let it be seen what ministers have to contend with in this day; not indeed the spirit of persecution, not sanguinary laws, not the amphitheatre, the axe, or the stake; but obstacles in some respects more formidable; for the trials I have just mentioned, if they lessened the number of professors, raised those that stood firm into the devotion of seraphs, the courage of heroes, and the constancy of martyrs; but our obstacles are the emasculating influences of ease and prosperity; the insidious snares of wealth, knowledge, and fashion; the engrossing power of trade, politics, and secular ambition; and then let it be considered what kind of preachers and pastors we want for such an age. If we had nothing more to do, and were contented to do no more, than to keep religion up to the low level which it now maintains, ministers of a common stamp might suffice; but to keep in check all the enemies of vital godliness which threaten the devastation of the church; to resist, by the potency of personal example and the energy of the pulpit, the worldly spirit which threatens to eat out the very core of vital piety; to keep up the evangelizing zeal which is awakened, and to blend with it a sanctity and a spirituality which shall make it as effective as it is busy; to do battle with all the forms of error by which our common faith is likely to be assailed; and to do this not only by the force of intellect, but by being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; to achieve this we want men of the same spirit as those who under the direct commission of Christ, preached the

word of salvation with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Have we many such men in the field? If not, why not? Must not the church of God blame herself, for not having sought such men by all the wrestling power of believing prayer. Had she felt the need of such men, and had she lifted up, not her hands and her voice merely, but all the energies of her renewed nature, in beseeching supplications to Him who is ascended to bestow this very gift, she would have obtained all she asked or wanted. Let the church only set her heart upon such a blessing as this, let her faith be equal to the expectation of it, and her prayer be as her faith, and she will have it. Why should she not expect it? What is there in the nature of the boon that forbids her to look for it? Does it contradict a single promise, or contravene a single arrangement, of her Divine Head? Does it compromise his honour, or require his unwonted interposition? Does it involve any stepping out of his ordinary course of action? Why then should it be thought incredible that she should obtain a more, a far more devoted and successful ministry, than she now possesses? Does the gospel of God's grace, either at home or abroad, prevail as it could be wished and might be expected? Does the work of conversion go forward extensively, and Christ's Kingdom make fresh encroachments on the empire of darkness as might be looked for? Who will venture to answer in the affirmative? Does love to Christ and souls beat in any man's heart, with so feeble a pulsation that he must be satisfied with what is doing, and be contented that things should go on as they do? Is there nothing to be done, no way to accelerate the work of redeeming mercy, no method to pour the principles of spiritual fertility more

rapidly and more diffusively through the moral wilderness of our barren world? Yes, one way is yet open, and that is for Zion to awake and bestir herself, and lay hold of God's strength, saying, "Send us more labourers into the field." We have forgotten to pray for ministers of a right stamp. The subject has never occupied, in our private, family, and social devotions, the place which its importance demands. It has been occasionally and coldly alluded to, but has not been lifted up to heaven with importunity by men who felt that they could not do without it.

"Truly if ever there was a period when the whole Christian world should be down upon their faces before the throne of mercy, imploring with all the importunity, and boldness, and perseverance of faith, a race of ministers, each full of the Holy Ghost, as was Barnabas or Paul, that period is passing over us. Not from one place or another, but from all quarters of the earth, testimony multiplies daily that amidst the greatest possible facilities for converting the world, a greatly increased and more devoted ministry is indispensable. This testimony comes to us, not indeed as the Macedonian cry came to the apostle in a supernatural vision; but in a manner not less affecting or decisive as to its purport. It is a real sound which flies round the land and rings in our ears all the day long; 'Send us preachers,' is the universal, ceaseless demand, at home and abroad. It comes from more than a thousand of our destitute churches; it comes from the cities, from the wilderness, from the islands, from the uttermost parts of the sea, from tracts until lately unknown to civilized man. This cry which sounds so loudly and so complainingly in our ears, should by general consent be turned into prayer and sent up to heaven. And shall we longer forbear to do this? Shall we stand and hear that unusual cry and feel no inclination to direct it to the ear of Him from whom help alone can come? Is it not a mysterious species of infatuation to forbear to lift up our cry to the Lord of the harvest? Why do we not, if this be the case, abjure the very religion of Jesus, and abandon ourselves, as well as the heathen, and the whole race of man to despair? Why should not a reform forthwith commence, and the place of prayer have more attractions than the eloquence of any mortal, or any angel's tongue? Why then will not every true

Christian make a covenant with himself to change his life in this particular, and from henceforth make it one of his chief subjects of wrestling supplication, that God would give us a more faithful, earnest, and laborious ministry? Why will we not call to mind how Abraham, and Moses, and Elias, and Daniel, and Paul, and above all how the blessed Jesus laboured in prayer, and resolve in God's strength to pray in the same manner? Oh, what an amount of beneficent power would such prayers exert upon the eternal destinies of our world! What wonders of grace would be witnessed in our churches, what accessions would be made to the sacred ministry, what an impulse would be given to the cause of missions, what brightness would be shed on all the prospects of the church!"*

I echo these beautiful sentiments, and earnestly implore for them the attention they demand. They touch us at the right point, and they speak to us at the proper season. We have multiplied and extended, of late, our collegiate institutions, and greatly improved our systems of ministerial education. We can speak of colleges whose architecture † would not disgrace Oxford or Cambridge, and of professors whose attainments in Biblical literature would not be surpassed by many teachers in national seats of learning; but as if to teach us our dependence upon God, few of them are at the

* "Religion of the Bible." A Select Discourse, by Dr. Skinner, of New York.

† The age is past when the taunt could with truth be thrown at Dissenters, that theirs is the religion of barns; and if it were not, this would be no reproach to those whose Lord was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. [Not to mention that meeting-houses more nearly resemble the basilica than any building in the shape of a cross or with a chancel. Ed.] The danger lies in sacrificing too much to beauty of architecture. Splendid men, as pastors and preachers, will do more for us than splendid buildings; not that they are incompatible, but they are by no means inseparable. Butler, the author of "The Analogy," and Jones, the author of the most learned work on the Canon, both studied within the ochre-coloured, old-fashioned walls of Tewkesbury College: while many a dolt has gone forth from our most magnificent buildings.

present moment filled with students; and as to those who are coming forth from them, how great is our anxiety lest they should not prove such eminent and earnest men as we could wish to see them! The same remark will apply to the evangelical party of the Church of England, and all other denominations. I would be the last man to speak lightly of education, but I would be the first to caution the church of Christ against the sin and the folly of making it our supreme dependence. Tutors can impart a knowledge of Latin, Greek, and philosophy, but God alone can bestow the physical and spiritual gifts which constitute the chief qualifications for the work of the ministry. It is a fact which must have struck every attentive observer, that of those who are employed in the ministry of the word, whether in the Established Church or out of it, comparatively few are very eminent. The brightest flowers of humanity are not laid upon the altar of the Lord in great numbers. The majority of ministers are of a common order of intellect, and, as in the firmament of heaven, only here and there a star attracts attention by its magnitude and brightness. Let it not be said that God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. This appertained to apostles, who, as they were clothed with the power of God by their gifts and miracles, could dispense with all other potency; but it is not the case with us, who without appropriate qualifications of native talent and education, can never expect the blessing of God.

IV. A revived state of the Church would produce a ministry such as that which has been described in the foregoing pages. In the natural order of things it would seem that the church cannot be revived without

a previous revival of the ministry; and yet, as the ministry are the children of the church, they can hardly be expected to rise above the level of the community out of which they spring. There is a kind of average piety of almost every age and every church, and our young men rarely come with more than this to our colleges: and therefore, although we do not dispute the fact that little expectation can be indulged of an increased piety in the churches, without an augmentation of ministerial devotedness, yet at the same time, the latter can almost as little be looked for, without the former. Revivals have sometimes begun with the people, who have drawn the ministry up to their own level. A lively church could not long endure a dull and lukewarm pastor, if he partook not of the prevailing excitement, he would feel himself soon obliged to leave his situation. If, therefore, the ministry cannot revive themselves and each other, it were an unspeakable mercy if they should receive an impulse from the people.

As we have already seen, many things in the present age are of a most auspicious character, and give it a lofty pre-eminence above some that have preceded it. Who can witness its busy activity, its generous liberality, its exhaustless ingenuity for the conversion of the world, without admiration and gratitude: but these are not all the elements of true piety, and it may be apprehended that, in innumerable cases, they are only the substitutes for the essential work of regeneration and sanctification. It may be feared that Satan is taking advantage of them to blind the judgment, and to delude the souls, of many. Men of keen observation, who can penetrate the surface, and see what lies below it, are of opinion that under-

neath this external covering of liberality and zeal, there lies a want of vital godliness; that much of what we see in our multiplied public institutions is but as flowers blooming in a shallow and sandy soil. They who are best acquainted with the state of our churches, express a doubt whether there is not a deplorable lack of that separation from the world in its spirit and customs, which the Christian profession implies. While this is the case, the ministers who come out from such a state of things are likely to rise no higher than their source. Hence it becomes our churches to consider the urgent necessity of their rising to a higher tone of piety, and joining heartily in any efforts that are made to bring about so desirable a state of things. Even those who have themselves drunk deepest into the spirit of the world, will sometimes lament the want of intenseness and spirituality on the part of their ministers: but do they not remember that their own worldly-mindedness is exerting an influence over their pastor, and producing that very state of mind in him which is the subject of their remark and censure? He was perhaps a more holy and heavenly man, when he came to them from college, young and flexible, and was at first surprised and grieved to witness the prevalence of lukewarmness among them; but after striving, in vain, to produce a better state of things among the members of his church, he was gradually drawn down to that low level from which he found it impracticable to raise them. Thus while I admit there is little hope of a revived church which does not rest on the previous revival of the ministry, I am tempted almost to argue in a circle, and to say there is little hope of the revival

of the ministry which does not rest on the previous revival of the church.

Let us then, both ministers and churches, set about in good earnest the revival of religion. We act and re-act upon each other. We help or hinder one another. We both want more religion; let the ministry seek it for the sake of the people, and the people for the sake of the ministry. If the ministers will not lead the people, let the people lead the ministers. If the blessing cannot descend from the pulpit to the pew, let it ascend from the pew to the pulpit. Let the church of the living God arise, put on her robe of righteousness, her garment of salvation, shake off the dust from her apparel, and shine forth in the beauties of holiness. We want a better church to make a better world; and a better church would most assuredly make a better world; and we also want a better ministry to make a better church; but if we cannot have them in the one order, may we have them in the other, and find that a better church is making a better ministry. If the rain of heaven collect not upon the hills to pour down its streams upon the vallies, may the vapour of the vallies rise to revive and refresh the tops of the hills.

V. We should, as pastors of the churches, look round our respective flocks, and see what devoted youths of ardent piety and competent abilities likely to be useful as ministers of Christ we have within our circles, and call them out to the work, without waiting for the first impulses of devotion to it to come from themselves. A radical mistake has been committed through our whole denomination, in supposing it is necessary in all cases for the desire after the sacred office to rise

up first of all, and spontaneously, in the breast of the aspirant. In consequence of this, many have thrust themselves forward who were altogether unfit for the work; while many eminently qualified for it, have been kept back by modesty. Does it not seem to be the work of the pastors and the churches, to call out from among themselves the most gifted and pious of their members for this object? Is not this the working out of the principle we have already considered, that the church is the conservator of an effective ministry? Are not they the best judges of talent and other prerequisites? Should this matter be left to the inflation of self-conceit, the prompting of vanity, or the impulse, it may be of a sincere, but unenlightened zeal? Nothing can be more erroneous than that this call of the church would be an officious intermeddling with the work of the Spirit in calling the ministry; for it may surely be conceived to be quite as rational a notion to suppose that the Spirit calls a person through the medium of the church and its pastor, as to imagine that the commission from above comes direct to the heart of the individual, especially as the church and the pastor, or at any rate the latter, is usually applied to, as a judge of the candidate's fitness for the work; and thus after all, the power and right of pronouncing a judgment upon the alleged call of the Divine Agent, are vested with the pastor and the church. To affirm that an individual cannot be supposed to have a very great fitness for the office, unless his love of souls has been strong enough to prompt him to desire the work of the ministry, and that he is not likely to be very earnest in it, if he be sent, instead of his going of his own accord, is assuming too much; for in the plan here recommended,

it is supposed that the individual who attracts the attention of the pastor is one who, in addition to true piety and competent abilities, has manifested an active zeal in the way of doing good. It is only on such an one that his eye would light, or to whom he would venture to make the suggestion. In all the official appointments recorded in the New Testament, from an apostle down to a deacon, the people were requested to look out for suitable men, and not to wait till they presented themselves. Let us then give our serious attention to this subject, and look out for the most pious, the most intelligent, and the most ardent of our young men, not forgetting at the same time to ascertain their physical qualifications of voice and constitution. It is not studious youths only that will do for this work, mere book-worms who will devour knowledge and make no repayment for it; but such as will unite a thirst for knowledge with an intense desire to employ every acquisition for saving souls. We must be inquisitive after such; and if they are youths in the more respectable classes of society, young men who have known something of good society, and acquired the manners and habits of gentlemen; who have had something to do with business, and have acquired such a proper degree of self-confidence, as will give them weight and influence of character, all the better. Low men, with coarse vulgar manners, may by the power of great talents rise above their origin, and be of value, as diamonds uncut and unpolished; yet how much would the value of those spiritual diamonds be increased by the removal of all that is coarse in them, and the polishing of all that is rough and dim. When vulgarity is associated with slender talents, it is as flint set in lead. There is nothing

in gentlemanly manners that deteriorates piety; and much, very much, that adds not only to the gracefulness, but to the usefulness, of the ministerial character. The graces, when baptized at the font of evangelical piety, arrayed in the robe of righteousness, and wearing the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, are useful handmaids to the Christian pastor, and procure favour for him in the solemn duties of his office. If we may judge from the specimens left on record in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul united the manners of a courtier with the fidelity of a prophet, and threw over the stern courage of a martyr, the mantle of a gentle courteousness. What could be more polished, yet what more faithful, than his address to Festus and Agrippa? And we can imagine that even his denunciation against the High Priest, who had commanded him to be smitten on the mouth, was all the more terrible because of the dignified severity with which it was uttered. Earnestness, then, is not incompatible with refinement, but is rendered more effective by it, and hence the importance of our sending our better educated youths to the sacred office.

Occasionally we may find in our churches some persons possessed of extraordinary talents for speaking and for active duty, who are too far advanced in manhood to go through a college curriculum, but who, notwithstanding, would make admirable preachers, and attain to considerable usefulness, as well as respectability. A man of natural genius, of strong intelligence, of eminent piety, and of pulpit power, is not to be rejected because he has not passed through the schools. Those who remember William Thorp, and especially that great theologian, Andrew Fuller, will not deny that

He who called his apostles, not from the philosophers of Greece, or from the orators of Rome, or from the Rabbis of Jerusalem, but from the fishermen of Galilee, may sometimes select a servant, even in our days, from those classes which have been debarred the privileges of a classical or a philosophical education. Among the prophets of antiquity was Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa. These, however, are the exceptions, not the rule. Even the bishops of our ecclesiastical establishment are lowering their standard of qualifications, as necessary in all cases, for the ministerial functions, and are accommodating their system to the wants of the people, by ordaining men to the sacred office, whom their predecessors an age or two back would have unquestionably refused.* We must not pretend to more fastidiousness than they, nor be horror-struck at the idea of introducing to the pastorate, men, who, though they are neither scholars nor philosophers, are likely to be powerful and useful preachers of the gospel. A collegiate education must be our general rule, which it may be hoped we shall never abandon; but it is a rule from which we must make exceptions in the case of those strong-minded, warm-hearted, earnest men, whose tough broad-sword will do more execution than many a weapon whose blade has received the highest polish that art can give it, and whose hilt sparkles with diamonds.

VI. This is a subject which demands the close and serious attention of ministers themselves. The whole

* Several of them have lately determined to ordain as deacons, men who have had no classical education, provided they have good preaching abilities. Latin and Greek are in such cases to be dispensed with.

present generation of our preachers from the oldest to the youngest must give their attention to the matter. I have known men of a past age, whose names are dear, and whose memory is fragrant, who to the last retained the ardour of their zeal, and whose labours, like the flame of the volcano rising from beneath the snow-covered surface of the mountain top, were carried on in association with their hoary hairs: and some such, though they are very few, still linger amongst us. Even they, and we who come next to them, and are verging on old age, must all do something more and something better than we have done for Christ and souls. Our sun is declining, and our shadows lengthen on the plain, but our day's work is not done; and instead of relaxing our diligence, we must work the harder, because the time of working is nearly over. As long as we have strength to grasp the sickle, or light to bind a sheaf, let us work on. Harvest-home will soon be here, and it is time enough for enjoyment when that arrives, and we shall meet our Master and our fellow-servants. To us the admonition comes with solemn emphasis, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave whither thou goest." For the sake of our younger brothers, let us be diligent. They look upon us as patterns; and let us therefore set them an example which shall come to them with the correctness of a good model, and the power of an ardent inspiration. Let there be no running from our posts as if we were weary of our service, and were panting for the otium cum dignitate. Let it be seen that the earnestness of our minds imparts vigour to our bodies, keeps off the infirmities of our declining years, and enables us to

renew our youth like the eagle's. It is a spectacle which the admirer of military glory loves to witness, to behold the veteran soldier, on whose countenance the suns of innumerable campaigns and the swords of his foes have left their visible marks, outstripping in courage, in feats of arms, and in swiftness of foot, all the younger warriors that fight at his side, and to see him rallying their fainting hearts by the strength of his own. Veterans in the hosts of Emanuel, see then your duty! On you it devolves to train the young recruits, and form their character; let them feel that they are by the side of heroes, and catch the inspiration of your heroism. Cast over them your shadow while you live, and they will then be anxious to find your mantle when your spirit has dropped it in her flight to the skies. Let them see you intent upon the conversion of sinners, given up to your work of saving souls: and let them hear in your conversation how much your heart is set upon this work. Show them by the manner in which you are finishing your course, how they ought to begin and carry forward theirs. Correct their mistakes, elevate their aims and inflame their zeal. Do all you can by your private intercourse with them to form their character aright for the service of the Lord. Talk to them modestly of your own success in the ministry, and how you succeeded in this high and glorious achievement. What manner of men ought you to be, by whom the ardour of others will be kindled or extinguished? May God's grace be sufficient for you!

But of what momentous consequence is it that our younger ministers and students should give to this subject its due attention! You have advantages which some who have gone before you never enjoyed, and

which at times make them almost envy your privileges; but if this be all you seek; if it be the best and the highest object you aspire to, you have mistaken your way in going to the pulpit, and had better, whatever of literature you may acquire, have drudged out life in one of the darkest of its recesses, or the humblest of its occupations, than to have entered the Christian ministry. Oh, what scenes attract your attention, and ought to engage your energies! There around you are immortal souls perishing in their sins, each one of more value than the whole material universe, each capable of being saved by your ministrations, and sure to acquire, by neglecting them, a deeper guilt and a heavier condemnation: there, in sight of your faith, is the Son of God, bleeding upon the cross for their redemption; there beneath you is the pit of hell, opening wide its mouth to receive them if they die in unbelief; there above you is heaven, throwing back its everlasting portals to receive them, if they are saved; there before you is the bar of judgment, at which you must soon meet them, to account for your ministry in reference to them; and there, beyond all, is eternity with its ever rolling ages, which are to be spent by them and you in rapture or in woe. Is this true? Is it fiction, or is it fact? If these things are not so, you are found false witnesses for Christ, for they are the common topics and the first principles of your discourses; but if they are all realities, then with what state of mind and heart should they be handled? Begin your ministry, beloved young brethren, with a clear understanding of its nature, and a deep impression of its importance. Do you covet usefulness? Earnestness is essential to it. You cannot do good in any extensive degree without it.

Listen to those who have gone before you; their testimony is founded both upon experience and observation. All, all will unite in this exhortation, "Be in earnest;" as well the very men who have had the least, as those who have exhibited the most, of this quality of character, and mode of action. Without this you cannot even be popular, to say nothing of usefulness. The public will hear an earnest minister, and will not hear any other. You may call this, if you will, bad taste, and wonder they will not listen to your highly intellectual and philosophical discourses, and be ready to withdraw in resentment the elaborate preparations they so little value, and retire from the pulpit. Whether they or you are wrong, this is the fact. He is an unwise tradesman, who, because he thinks the public taste is vicious, and ought to be corrected, will exhibit in his window, and place upon his shelves, no other goods than those the public will not buy. In this case the taste of the public may be wrong, and that of the tradesman right: but in the case of preaching, if the people demand an earnest exhibition of gospel truth, and their minister, instead of this, will give them nothing but dull, dry, abstract sermons, it is they who are right, and he is wrong: they, better than he does, know not only what they want, but what he was appointed by God to furnish them! Do not then mistake and determine to try to be useful in some other way than that which the God of nature and of grace has prescribed. Do not resolve to try the experiment of opening a new road to usefulness for yourself; another way than that which apostles, martyrs, and reformers have trod, and which the ministers and missionaries of every age and every country have

found to be the power of God unto salvation, even the doctrine of the cross; another way which you may deem more befitting your powers and your scholarship, and the enlightenment of the age. You will inevitably go wrong if you do so, and close your career, lamenting your folly, and confessing that your ministerial life has been a lost adventure; a melancholy confession, and one that is not unfrequently made. God gives man only one life, and affords him no opportunity to live through another term of existence, in which to profit by his own experience; but he gives him abundant opportunity to avail himself of the knowledge gained by his own trials as they go on, and by observation of others. You have known enough and seen enough already of what will, and what will not, answer the end of your office, and save souls. You have only to look back, and to look around, to find evidence to guide you. You cannot mistake your means easily, if you do not mistake your object. Settle with yourselves what the latter is, that it is to save sinners by leading them to repent of sin, to believe on Christ, and to lead a holy life; and then you can scarcely fail to perceive that this never has been accomplished, and ordinarily never can be, but by beseeching them, and praying them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

We who are growing grey in the service of Christ, feel somewhat anxious about those who are to succeed us. We see with gratitude and wonder what God has wrought by us; and we know how, as instruments, we have done it. We see how souls have been converted, churches have risen up, and believers have lived and

died in the faith, and know full well that it was by the testimony of the gospel, plainly but energetically stated. In looking back, we often feel regret that the activity required by the age took from us the opportunity to make greater attainments in elegant literature and general knowledge; but no regret that we have made the great theme of Christ crucified the subject of our ministry, and the salvation of souls the object of our lives. We feel, amidst the gathering shadows of evening, a calm and sweet satisfaction that in that we made a right choice, mingled with a profound humiliation that we have not followed it with more intensity of devotion. We see many things in the review of the past that we would alter, but we would make no alteration in that; we see much that we could improve, but only in the manner by which we could more successfully accomplish that object; and if it were permitted us to live our existence over again, or to speak more correctly, to spend another term, and set out afresh, it would be our high resolve to get more of what the men of science and of literature admire, only to enable us to preach with greater power the doctrine of the cross, and to be better qualified to seek with more ardour, and with better hopes of success, the end of our ministry. The love of applause, and we have all too much of it, is we hope dying in our hearts, or at any rate it appears to be more and more worthless, and the approval of our great Master more and more intensely to be desired. Whether we look back upon the past, consider our feelings for the present, or look at the prospects and anticipate the disclosures of the future, we know of no arguments cogent enough, no language sufficiently expressive, to

enforce upon our younger brethren in the ministry, in reference to the purpose of their lives, the important admonition, "Be in earnest."

VII. Considerable care and caution are requisite, and much more than have been exercised hitherto, in the introduction and reception of young men into our colleges. Incompetent ministers are the burden, as inconsistent ones have been the dishonour, of every section of the church, and the hindrance of the progress of the gospel in the world. In hearing them one is ready to wonder how it ever entered into their hearts to conceive they had been called of God to a work for which they seem to possess scarcely a single qualification beyond their piety; and the wonder is doubled to account for any minister recommending them, or any committee receiving them: without intellect, without heart, and equally without voice, they seem sent into the ministry only to keep out others more competent for the work. How many have been permitted to escape from the pursuits of business, in which they might have done well, to endure the greatest privations, and to submit to the most humiliating mortifications, in an office, for the functions of which they were deplorably unfit! How many of them have passed through life in the misery of being amidst a discontented people, or in wandering from place to place, without remaining with any church long! Such cases have been found in every age, and in every denomination, but they were never so numerous as they now are. A spirit of fastidiousness has crept over churches, and unsettledness over pastors. How great then is the responsibility of recommending a young man to enter the ministry! It is an act drawing after it conse-

quences of a most momentous nature, and should never be done without the utmost care and caution. It would be well if ministers would call in others to bear the burthen with them, and to share the responsibility. It may in some cases expose a pastor to some risk of giving offence, if in the exercise of his fidelity he should discourage the aspirations of an unsuitable candidate; but it is an evil from which he would be sheltered, at least in part, by referring the case to the consideration of two or three of his brethren in his vicinity. It is not, however, pastors only who should be cautioned against recommending unsuitable candidates, but the committees of our colleges should be no less careful about receiving them. It is extremely difficult by a first examination, or even by a probationary term, to judge of eligibility and fitness, as great excellence in some cases lies hidden under a very uncouth and unpromising exterior, and in others is very slow to develope itself; while on the contrary, a showy exterior over a shallow substratum is so deceptive, that not only months, but even years, must roll on, before the necessary qualifications can be determined upon. But a false delicacy has sometimes led our committees to retain young men in the colleges, of whose unfitness there remained no question, rather than put them and their friends to the pain of recommending them to discontinue their studies, and return to trade. And it should be recollected that to carry on the education of a young man without any rational probability that he will ever attain to usefulness of any kind, either as an author, tutor, or preacher, is on the part of the committee a betrayal of their trust, and a misapplication of the funds entrusted to their care. Let there be, then, a far

greater degree of care and discrimination exercised in the initiative by our pastors than there has been: ten earnest men are better, and will do more for us, than a hundred incompetent ones. It would be better that churches should remain longer without pastors, than gain unsuitable ones; just as it is a far more endurable evil for a man who wishes for connubial felicity, to endure the privations of celibacy any length of time, than to hurry from them into the miseries of an unhappy marriage. We must be more careful in the selection, the reception, and the retention of our students, than we have been. Since it is so difficult to find an egress for those who are once in the ministry, it is highly incumbent upon us to watch with greater vigilance the door of entrance to it.

VIII. There is no class of men to whom we can look so naturally, or with so much entreaty for their aid, in furnishing us with devoted ministers, as our Professors. If the college be the mould in which the preacher and pastor are cast, the tutor is the man who shapes the mould, and pours the metal into it. How much then depends upon these beloved and honoured brethren! What a trust is reposed with them, how solemn, how awful, how responsible! If it be a momentous thing for a pastor to have the care of a single church, how much more so, for a tutor to have the care of twenty or thirty youthful minds, each of which is looking forward to the pastorate; and to have them replaced by others every five years. Such an occupation is enough to make the stoutest heart tremble under an oppressive sense of its responsibilities. The strength of our churches lies in our ministry; of our ministry in our colleges; and of our colleges in their tutors. There is nothing about

which we ought to be more anxious than about this part of our system. Happily to whatever department of ministerial education we look, whether to the philological, mathematical, or philosophical; whether to hermeneutical or dogmatical theology, we find in our various academic institutions, professors of whom we are not ashamed. If we need improvement anywhere, it is in the homiletical and pastoral department. We can scarcely wonder that in such an age as this, our professors should be anxious to push forward their alumni as far as possible into the regions of literature and science; or that now that the London University gives Nonconformists an opportunity of obtaining academic degrees and honours, they should feel solicitude to give full proof of their official assiduity by their students obtaining those distinctions; but it is well for them to remember that one popular, earnest, and successful preacher will bring more real credit to their college, and give it more favour with the public, than a dozen Bachelors of Arts, and half-a-dozen Masters to boot. The occasional exhibition, and it can be but occasional, of the letters denoting a degree affixed to a man's name, will not often excite the inquiry, "Where was he educated?" but the constant exhibition and effect of his power as a preacher will be a public and permanent recommendation of the institution where he was trained to such efficiency. It is true that natural preaching talent will grow in almost any soil, and under almost any culture; but it may be carried to a higher degree of perfection in one place, and by one hand, than another. There is also such a thing as colleges gaining a special and permanent character, one for turning out better scholars, a second for teaching philosophy better, and

a third for carrying on a superior theological training; but that, in the long run, will be the most useful, and the most deservedly popular, which succeeds in sending forth the greatest number of earnest and successful preachers.

All earnestness has a tinge of enthusiasm about it, and as no man can kindle this in the soul of another who has none of it himself, our tutors should have this mental fire, with judgment to keep it in its proper place, to do its proper work; and however they may value classical, scientific, and philosophical studies, their heart should be set on the formation of popular, powerful, and useful preachers. Those who know how much there is to do even in the way of preliminary training, with many young men that enter our seats of learning, and how much of necessity students' time and attention must be divided among the various objects of study, will confess that it is no easy matter to give that prominence to homiletics which their supreme importance demands. But, notwithstanding this, opportunities will continually present themselves, to an anxious and observant professor, for inculcating upon his students that all that he is teaching them will be useless, if they do not make it subservient to their great business of preaching the gospel and converting sinners. But it is of especial importance that our tutors should be upon the alert when their students begin to preach, that in their first pulpit labours they should select the true object of all preaching, pursue it in a right course, and seek it with due vigour. What a student is in his first public services, that he is likely to be through life; and if he has no earnestness then, he is likely to have little afterwards. It happens that as all excellences are rarely

combined in one man, many of our professors, though highly gifted as regards talent and acquirement, are not themselves much distinguished as preachers, and therefore can not present in themselves living models of what pulpit power, as to manner, really is. Still, they who cannot illustrate it by example, can teach it by precept. May they see the importance of the subject, and labour to the utmost to inculcate it upon the youths looking up to them for instruction, and make it their chief aim to kindle in their breasts the ardour of pulpit enthusiasm! We can easily imagine with what delight they must sometimes witness the advance by their pupils in extensive and accurate scholarship, in analytical power, in logical acuteness, in metaphysical subtlety; and that in some rare cases they may felicitate themselves on such results of their labour, though they can foresee they will never be associated with pulpit efficiency; but as a general rule, nothing with reference to their students, should gratify, much less satisfy them, short of adaptation to popular effect. The demand preferred by our country upon the military schools is, "Give us soldiers:" upon our medical colleges, "Give us surgeons and physicians:" upon our Inns of Court, "Give us lawyers." The cry sent up to our colleges is, "Give us powerful preachers, devoted pastors." And it will not do to meet this demand, any more than it would the others just quoted, by replying, "We will send you Bachelors and Masters of Arts." Much less will it do to send men who will feed the churches with a dry and sapless verbal exegesis of German theology, instead of the sweet and succulent expositions of our Scotts, our Henrys, our Wardlaws, and our Barneses. Ministers may study the profoundest criticisms for their own improvement and

carry on a course of exegetic exposition in the pulpit; but it must be of a character that shall combine impression with instruction; and let our tutors aim to train preachers, who shall make their sermons expository, their expositions sermonic, and both instinct with life and essentially popular. Let them give us in the men they send into our churches, as much as they can of every thing which can polish the taste, inform, even adorn the intellect, and give weight and influence to the character in general society; the more of all these acquirements the better; but let them never forget that what is always wanted for the momentous subject of religion, and what is especially wanted in these times of intense earnestness, is a race of ministers as earnest as the times in which they live. May God help them to train such ministers for us!

IX. If it be the duty of the churches to call out ministers, it must of course be no less their duty to provide means for their education. Among all the objects of Christian benevolence, there is not one which has a prior or a stronger claim than our collegiate institutions, and yet it is too true that they are the last whose demands are properly regarded. Among Protestant Dissenters especially, the main pivot of their whole system is the ministry; upon this, every thing, under God, must turn. As this is strong, every thing else amongst them will be strong; and as this is weak, everything else will be weak. The springs which supply the reservoirs of our evangelizing societies, both at home and abroad, are to be traced back to our colleges: and yet the churches, if we may judge from their conduct, do not seem to be duly aware of this fact. Colleges are not however to be considered as eleemosynary institutions,

where a race of literary paupers are sustained by the alms of the affluent; for it is becoming increasingly the practice for our students to pay for their own board: but beyond this, we have the invaluable services of our professors to reward, and many other expenses to defray. This outlay must be borne by the churches in all cases where there is no endowment, or none adequate to the entire support of the institution. And how can property be better applied? or what expenditure produces a quicker or more abundant return? A good education for our ministry is cheaply obtained at any price: and every shilling we expend in this way tells at once and before our eyes upon the object for which it is intended. And yet strange to say, there is no object for which we find it more difficult to maintain a regular and adequate supply of means. Foreign and home missions have an annual collection from almost every church in our denomination, and yet how few are there of our churches who grant an annual collection for any college, and what multitudes who never grant such a collection at all? The platform is the stage of modern activity, but our colleges can make no exhibition there: we can employ no succesSon of orators to advocate our cause by speeches in support of resolutions; can exhibit no foreigners; can produce no excitement by tales of horror, of pathos, or of adventure; yet where would the platform be but for the pulpit, and what is the pulpit without the college? We ought not, it is true, to do less for our other organizations, but we ought to do far more for our educational system. We must bestir ourselves, and not allow this on which every thing depends, to fall into the rear, or be thrown into the shadow of one or two

deservedly popular societies. If a larger part of the zeal manifested in arguing for the voluntary principle were employed in a more liberal support of our denominational institutions, they would be in a far better state than they now are, and the power of that principle more clearly seen, and more successfully advocated. With all our ardour in the cause of Nonconformity, it is easier to raise large funds for other objects of benevolence than for this. The London Missionary Society, which is chiefly supported by the Congregational body, has an income of nearly eighty thousand pounds a year; while that same body does not raise by voluntary contributions more perhaps than eight or nine thousand for our seats of learning; and even this is not so economically expended as it might be by a consolidation of our colleges. It is high time the whole system were looked into.

It is however somewhat cheering to know that this subject is beginning to be understood by our churches, and a more just appreciation of the value of an educated ministry, to be made by the intelligence of the age; and as a natural consequence there is springing up a more general disposition to support the expense thereby incurred. Many instances have occurred of late, of the owners of property apportioning a large share of it, either in the way of founding colleges, or establishing scholarships, for the education of young men for the ministry. An individual who founds one of these scholarships, may, if he gives his property at the age of thirty-five, and lives to be seventy, have, during his lifetime, and ever afterwards, six or seven ministers, educated by his means, preach-

ing the gospel at the same time; and when he has reached his heavenly home, may welcome to glory through a long succession of ages souls that have been saved by the labours of those ministers for whose education he had set apart his property. How laudable and how noble an object of honourable ambition does such a proposal present to those who have at once the wish and the means to do good! Let the churches collectively, and their wealthy members individually, well consider then the obligation laid upon them to provide all that may be necessary to ensure the education of a ministry adapted to the circumstances of this extraordinary age!

CHAPTER XI.

THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE INFLUENCE TO MAKE THE MINISTRY EFFICIENT.

This treatise would be essentially defective in the estimation both of its author and its readers, if after so much has been advanced about instrumentality, nothing were to be said about the agency which is necessary to render it effectual for the accomplishment of its object. In all Divine operations, whether in the world of nature or of grace, God employs a chain of dependent means for the working out of his purposes and plans: but though dependent, they are appropriate. In acknowledging, as we must do, the adaptation of these means to the production of the intended result, we do homage to God's wisdom; while in confessing their dependence for efficiency upon his blessing, we do no less homage to his power and grace. There is no analogy which I can borrow from the world of nature that can satisfactorily illustrate the operation of Divine grace on the human mind. I know very well that second causes in the material universe depend for their efficiency upon Divine influence: but it is an influence of a totally different kind, and exerted altogether in a different matter from that of which I now write; and we are very little aided in our perceptions of the nature of the Spirit's operation

upon the human mind, by anything we observe in the world of vegetable or animal life.

There are two aspects in which man is to be viewed in relation to the means employed for his salvation, he is to be considered as both a rational and a sinful creature, (or as a rational creature whose reason is under the dominion of sin), and consequently, whatever method be adopted for his salvation, he must be dealt with in both these views of his condition. His fallen state as a sinner has not bereft him of his reason, will, and responsibility; but his reason and will alone will never lift him out of his condition as a fallen sinner. He cannot be dealt with otherwise than as he is, and he must be treated as a rational creature, and not as a brute or a block. His intellect must be appealed to by argument, and his heart by motives. And it will be seen that in the means of grace, and especially in preaching, there is provision for this. There is truth to be presented to the intellect, truth which represents the whole state of the case between God and the sinner, the nature and obligations of the moral law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the weight of the tremendous penalty of the violated precept; the wonderful love of God in the provision he has made for the salvation of the sinner, with the eternal results of misery or bliss which follow upon faith and unbelief respectively. In this, there is something in its nature adapted to engage the attention, and to interest the heart, of the sinner. It is not only the truth, but just the truth that suits his condition. In addition to this, there is, in preaching, the adaptation of the manner, as well as the matter, to his circumstances, the tendency of the living voice, minis-

terial solicitude, and earnest elocution, to engage the intellect and impress the heart. It will follow of course that earnestness is a part of this well-adapted system of means, and the more earnest a man is, the more likely, so far as means go, is he to do good; for if it be the matter which God blesses to change the heart, it is also the manner which he blesses to fix the attention preparatory to this change: there is as obvious an adaptation in the latter as in the former. How comes it to pass that there is greater efficiency usually attendant upon hearing the word, than there is upon reading it? Just because there is a greater adaptation to fix attention and to impress the heart; and by the same rule I argue there is more adaptation to do this in one man's manner than in that of another. Hence we see that those preachers are most successful who we might expect to be so, independently of the Divine power. This does not disprove the necessity of a Divine influence, but only shews what order of instrumentality it is that the Divine Spirit usually employs, and consequently what instrumentality we should select. As God does not usually bless ignorance, dulness, obscurity, or feebleness, we should avoid them; for to look for great results from them, is to expect not only what God has not promised, but what he very rarely bestows. God deals with us as rational creatures, by presenting to us, and requiring us to understand and believe that truth, the reception of which into the heart changes the whole character and conduct.

But there is in the heart of man, not only an indifference, but an opposition to Divine truth. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the

law of God, neither indeed can be." The heart so blinds the judgment that "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore, however the attention may be gained by the manner of a preacher, (and gained it must be in order to conversion,) yet the heart is still opposed to the truth; and hence the need of the Spirit's influence to subdue this resistance of the heart to the truth itself. Thus the truth and the Spirit concur in conversion: it is the sinner being brought to know and love the objects presented in the truth, therefore the truth must be presented to the intellect, in order that it may be known and loved: but it never will be so loved, however theoretically understood, till the Spirit takes away the disrelish for it which is in the heart. Without the truth, there is nothing to engage the attention and employ the intellect of man as a rational being; without the Spirit there is no right disposition of the heart, when the truth is so presented. If a certain quality in an object be the ground of dislike to it, an increased knowledge of the object and of this quality, cannot in the nature of things subdue our hostility; the taste must be changed ere the object can be relished. It is precisely thus with the sinner and the truth; he dislikes the gospel for its holiness, and no increase of light will vanquish his enmity to it. Consequently, however earnest the preacher's manner, and however scriptural his matter, no saving result will follow, unless the Spirit give his blessing. Yet preaching is as necessary as if all were done by it alone, without the Spirit, because it is by this means that the Spirit

usually works in the conversion of sinners. And since it is by appropriate means that he accomplishes his purposes, there is nothing in this doctrine to discourage exertion. There are means which carry in themselves the rational hope, if not the promise, of success. God will not accept the lame sacrifice, nor send down the signs of his approval on service which involves no real effort of heart or mind in his cause. The influence of the Holy Spirit comes not as a bounty upon indolence, but as a stimulus to exertion. Its office is not to give the human faculties a license to slumber, but to supply man with motives to watchfulness. Its descent upon the church is not as the torpor which betokens disease, but as an element of activity bespeaking moral and spiritual health. God is unquestionably sovereign in the dispensation of this blessed influence. He giveth it in such measures, on such occasions, and to such instruments, as it seems good to him. He that directs the course of the clouds, and causes them to drop their treasures where and when he pleases, makes the dew of his grace, and the rain of his Spirit, to fall according to the counsel of his own will. There is no such necessary connection between the exhibition of the truth and the conversion of the soul, as there is between the application of fire and the combustion of inflammable matter. The apostle says, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as God gave to every man? I have planted, Apollus watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." One should think it im-

possible to mistake the meaning of this language, or to doubt whether special Divine influence be necessary for the conversion of the soul, or whether the communication of it be a prerogative of Divine sovereignty.

Still there is every ground to expect the influence we need. It is our privilege to live under the dispensation of the Spirit, as well as under that of the Messiah. The former of these is connected with the latter: or perhaps more correctly speaking they are identical; the covenant established in Christ's blood is the economy of the Spirit. The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of the Spirit. I do not mean to represent this divine influence as confined to the Christian economy, for since the beginning of time no soul has been converted or sanctified but by this heavenly power; but the communications of it before the coming of Christ were limited, partial, and scanty, compared with what they have been since: they constituted not the shower, but only the drops which precede it. Hence the language of the evangelist, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This idea, that we are under the Spirit's economy, should enlarge our expectations of rich communications of this invaluable and essential blessing. The view I have given of Divine sovereignty is not intended, nor when rightly understood, is it calculated, to discourage hope, but simply to teach dependence. While God reserves to himself the right of bestowment, and acts upon his own rules of communication, he warrants and invites the most comprehensive requests, and the largest antici-

pations. Since he has promised to give the boon in answer to the prayer of faith, it would seem to be our own fault that we have it not in more abounding measure. The very recollection of our privilege in being placed under such an economy, might seem to be enough to call forth our prayers and to awaken our expectations. Instead of being surprised that so much of this Divine power accompanies our ministry in the most successful periods of our history, we should be surprised that we receive so little of it, and enquire after the obstructing cause. In a country like Egypt, where rain seldom falls, a shower is the exception, and a dry atmosphere the general rule; but in our variable climate, a long drought is the rarity, and the frequent shower is the common occurrence. The husbandman ploughs and sows in this land, with his expectant eyes upon the heavens, and feels disappointed if the fertilizing rain is withheld. So should it be with us, in reference to the shower of God's grace. We are not in the dry and arid atmosphere of the Levitical economy, but enjoy the privilege of the dew-distilling, rain-dropping dispensation of the Spirit; and with us the question should be, why we have not more of this Divine influence, and what has provoked the Lord to withhold from us the genial influences of his grace. Instead of being at any time astonished that our ministry is so much blessed, we should enquire why it is not always so. When we consider what is said, that God "willeth not the death of a sinner, but would rather that he should repent, and turn from his wickedness and live;" when we recollect what he has done for the salvation of sinners; when we add to this, that the gospel is his own truth, and preach-

ing his own institution, we are sometimes ready to wonder that he does not pour out that influence which is necessary to give effect to the purposes of his own benevolence, and almost to enquire, "What does the Lord now wait for?" In answer to this it may be replied, "He waits for the earnest labours of his ministers, the faith of his church, and the believing prayers of both."

It is quite perceptible that the necessity of Divine influence is rather a dogma of faith, than a principle of practice, both with ministers and their flocks. Did the people really believe it, were it matter of inwrought conviction, and were there the least seriousness of spirit in their religion, how much less dependence would there be upon men, how much less would there be said about talent, how much less homage would be paid to genius and eloquence, and how much more looking up to God by intense and persevering supplication would there be! Recollecting that God works by means, and by means adapted to promote his ends, there would be no danger of sinking into an enthusiastic and irrational neglect of them; but on the contrary there would be more constant and serious attendance upon them. The knowledge that preaching, and especially earnest preaching, is the Spirit's instrumentality, would lead men to seek that instrumentality, in order that they might have that blessing. How highly would it exalt the minister to consider him as the Spirit's instrument, and how important would it make the sermon to regard it as God's means to bless the soul! To view ministers and sermons apart from the work of God is immeasurably to sink both; it is to cease to view the preacher as

an ambassador of Christ, and instead of it, to listen to him only as a lecturer on religion. With what sacred awe and with what fervent prayer would he be heard, by those who viewed him as the appointed medium of that influence, which, if received, would illuminate, renew, and sanctify their souls!

But if it be incumbent on the people to remember the dependence of means upon the Divine blessing, how much more so is it the duty of ministers? It is an article of our creed, it is often the subject of our sermons, and it is acknowledged in our prayers; but after all, is our conviction of dependence upon the Spirit so deep, practical, and constant, as to prevent us from attempting anything in our own strength, and make us to feel strong only in the Lord and in the power of his might? Do we conduct the pursuits of our studies, as well as regulate the prayers of our closets, under this conviction? Do we with child-like simplicity, and in the spirit which we inculcate upon our hearers in reference to their personal salvation, habitually give ourselves up to the guidance and blessing of this Divine Agent? Do we look up for wisdom to guide us in the selection of our texts, and the composition of our sermons? Do our eyes and our hearts go up to heaven, as we think and write for our people? Do we go to our pulpit in a praying frame, as well as in a preaching one; praying even while we preach, for our people, as well as for ourselves? Do we thus clothe ourselves with Omnipotence, and go forth as with the Lord ever before us? Do we recollect that from all that crowd of immortal souls before us, we shall gather nothing but human praise or censure, except the Lord

be with us; that not one dark mind will be illumined, not one hard heart softened, not one inquiring soul directed, not one wounded spirit healed, not one uneasy conscience appeased, unless God the Spirit do it? Do we really want to accomplish those objects, or merely to deliver a sermon that will please the people, and gratify our own vanity? If the former, how entire, how confident, how believing, should be our sense of dependence upon something far higher than the best and most appropriate instrumentality! Such a feeling of dependence would cramp none of the energies of our soul, would stunt none of our powers, quench none of our fire, repress none of our intensity of manner. So far from it, we should derive from it unspeakable advantage in addressing our hearers; a seriousness, tenderness, and majesty, beyond what the greatest unassisted talent could command, would pervade our discourses; a superhuman influence would rest upon us; a Divine glory would irradiate us; and we should speak in the power and demonstration of the Spirit. "Possessed of this celestial unction, we should be under no temptation to neglect a plain gospel, in quest of amusing speculations and unprofitable novelties; the most ordinary topics would open themselves with a freshness and interest, as though we had never considered them before; and the things of the Spirit would display their inexhaustible variety and depth. We shall pierce the invisible world, we shall look, so to speak, into eternity, and present the very essence and core of religion, while too many preachers, for want of spiritual discernment, rest satisfied with the surface and the shell. We shall not allow ourselves to throw one grain of incense on

the altar of vanity, and shall forget ourselves so completely, as to convince our hearers we do so; and displacing everything else from the attention, leave nothing to be felt or thought of, but the majesty of truth, and the realities of eternity."* The preacher who cherishes such a frame of mind will appear with a radiance not less dazzling perhaps than that of genius, and far more sacred heavenly and divine; and when carried to his highest pitch of earnestness and dependence, he will seem almost to reach the sublime symbol of the apocalypse, of the angel standing in the sun. "But this kind goeth not forth but by fasting and prayer." A deep, practical conviction of the need of the Spirit, would make us men of prayer, would send us to our closets, and keep us there. Here perhaps is the cause why we have not more success in our ministry, and are not more frequently and more heartily gladdened by the conversion of souls to God; we seek to be men of the pulpit merely, and are not sufficiently men of the closet. It is a mystery in God's moral government that he should make the communications of his grace for the salvation of sinners dependent in any degree upon the prayers of others; yet he does so, and we know it; and yet knowing it, how little have we been affected by it, and stirred up to prayer on this account! We have uttered our complaints of the fruitlessness of our ministry long enough before one another; but, as Dr. Wilson says in his introduction to the "Reformed Pastor," "One day spent in fasting and prayer to God, is worth a thousand days of complaint and lamentation before men."

* Mr Hall "On the Discouragements and Support of the Christian Minister."

The author of this work can assure his brethren that it is not with any disposition to accuse them, and exalt or exculpate himself, that he writes thus. He takes his full share of blame for this deficiency of a spirit of fervent prayer, and his full share of humiliation on this account. The activities of the age, which require us to be so much in public, may furnish, if not an excuse, yet some mitigation of blame, for the too little time spent in fervid private prayer. Devotion is damped by business. Still even with this palliation, we are verily guilty, for we do not pray as if we believed we were sent to save souls from death, and that we could not be successful in a single instance without the grace of God. Who of us can read the diaries of such men as Doddridge, Brainerd, Payson, and Martyn, and very many others, and not stand reproved for our lamentable deficiency in the exercise of earnest prayer? Perhaps in modern times there was never so much of social, and never less of private, prayer. We introduce all our business transactions with prayer, but too often in a business spirit, and with a sad want of sincerity, seriousness, and deep devotion; so that the very frequency and want of reverence with which we engage in such exercises of devotion, tends to diminish the spirit of prayer. Nothing is more to be dreaded than a depression of the spirit of devotion, and nothing more intensely to be desired than its elevation. A praying ministry must be an earnest one, and an earnest ministry a praying one. Let us then feel ourselves called upon by all the circumstances of the times to abound more and more in fervent supplications. Let us, if we can in no other way command

more time for prayer, take it from study or from sleep. We have neither right nor reason to expect the Spirit, if we do not ask for his gracious influence; and without him we can do nothing. Let us take care lest the bustling activity, and the endless multiplication of societies, should supplant, instead of calling forth, the feeling of intense devotion. We never more needed prayer, we were never more in danger of neglecting it. There is plausibility in the excuse that we had better abridge the time of praying than the time of acting. But it will be found in the end that doings carried on at the sacrifice of prayer, will end in confusion and vanity. Public spirit in the cause of religion, however prevalent or energetic, if it be not maintained in a feeling of dependence upon God, will be regarded by him as the image of jealousy in the temple, which maketh jealous. Our sermons are the power of man, or perhaps we might say his weakness; but our prayers are in a modified sense the power of God. Let us not slacken in preaching, but let us abound more in prayer: let us not quench a ray of intellect, but let us add to it the warmth of devotion: let us labour as if the salvation of souls depended upon our own unaided energies, and then let us feel as did the apostle when he said, "though I be nothing." The eternal destinies of our hearers hang not only upon our sermons but upon our prayers; we carry out the purposes of our mission, not only in the pulpit, but in the closet; and may never expect to be successful ministers of the New Covenant, but by this two-fold importunity in first beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, and then beseeching God to pour out his Spirit upon them: thus

we honour his wisdom in the use of the means he has appointed, and then his power by confessing our dependence upon his grace.

Baxter concludes his "Reformed Pastor" with an expression of his confidence in the usefulness of the book he had written, which it would be unwarrantable and ridiculous vanity in me to adopt in reference to mine, in any other way than that of hope and prayer; but in this spirit I borrow the language of that great and holy man, and say, "I have now, brethren, done with my advice, and leave you to the practice. Though the proud receive it with scorn, and the selfish and slothful with distaste, or even with indignation, I doubt not but God will use it, in despite of the opposition of sin and Satan, to the awakening of many of his servants to their duty, and to the promotion of a work of right reformation: and that his blessing will accompany the present undertaking for the saving of many souls, the peace of you that undertake and perform it, the exciting of his servants throughout the nation to second you, and the increase of the purity and unity of his churches. Amen."

INTRODUCTION

TO THE ENGLISH EDITION OF

DR. SPENCER'S PASTOR'S SKETCHES.

THE MEANS AND METHODS TO BE ADOPTED FOR SUCCESS IN THE MINISTRY.

What is the chief end of the Christian ministry? Such a question, however momentous, might seem and ought to be now superfluous. Yet it is not. What is known may be forgotten, what is admitted may be neglected, what is acknowledged to be a primary object may be lost sight of amidst matters of secondary importance. And this, it is to be feared, is to a considerable extent the case with the subject before us. The end of the Christian ministry must, of necessity, be identical with that of the mediation of Christ. The cross and the pulpit must be in harmony as to their design. And what an ineffable honour does this confer upon the minister of the gospel, by bringing him into direct fellowship with the Son of God in his great redeeming work! But this honour is secured only by our keeping perpetually in view the same end as Christ. For what then did the Son of God offer himself up in sacrifice on Calvary? The glory of God in the eternal salvation of immortal souls. And that is the sublime end of the Christian ministry. The apostle has told us this, where he says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

So again he says in another place, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The same view is presented in those impressive words, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." Our whole race are under the curse of the violated law, and were going down to perdition: Christ, in the plan and purpose of infinite mercy, died to redeem them from the curse; and the design of the ministry is to bring men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; to the possession of a new moral nature and the practice of a holy life; and thus to be the means of their eternal salvation. Where this is not accomplished; where souls are not converted and saved; the chief end of the ministry is not attained. There may be much sound and clear exposition of the Word of God, and much eloquent descant upon religious truth; a large congregation may be gathered, full of admiration for the talents, and affection for the person, of the preacher; the church may be in harmony; there may be much liberality in the support of public institutions; the shepherd and the flock may be satisfied with each other; but if this be all, if conversion be not effected and souls be not saved, the end of the ministry is not attained. The great object of preaching is lost with regard to every soul that is not regenerated and redeemed. There may be, and there is in very many cases, some external prosperity, where, as regards the chief end of the ministry, the preacher labours in vain and spends his strength for nought.

It must be borne in mind that I am now dwelling

upon the chief end of the ministry. There are many subordinate ends which are by no means unimportant. The explanation of the Word of God; the comfort of the afflicted; the good order and peace of families by the cultivation of the domestic virtues; the improvement of society by the inculcation of Christian morality, are all objects borne on the mind, and promoted by the labours, of the faithful pastor. But to whatever extent these benefits may be conferred by the pulpit, they are not its chief purpose. Let it be written in letters of light, that the conversion of apostate man to God, is the ultimate design of the ministry. A preacher of the gospel is not merely the teacher of a sacred science; not merely the leader of religious worship; not merely the administrator of religious ordinances; not merely the ruler of a Christian church; he is all this, it is true; but he is more, he is instrumentally the converter of men's souls to God; and all the other characters just mentioned are dependent upon this. And he that is satisfied with those other characters however he may excel in them, is contenting himself with a success that leaves him infinitely short of his ultimate object. To leave off with these lesser ends, is just as if we should be satisfied with regulating the conversation, and promoting the order, of a company of condemned criminals in a prison, without attempting to induce them to use the prescribed means for saving their souls. For the accomplishment of this end, I mean the real conversion of men to God, we need a holy unction from above, a consecrated spirit, a yearning over souls, a wrestling with God like Christ in Gethsemane, for a new baptism for the ministry with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Then, let the man who is not blessed to the conversion of souls, who does not hear the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" addressed, and often addressed to him by anxious inquirers, say, and sorrowfully say, "I am losing the end of my ministry. I have a good congregation, my people are pleased with my labours, all is quiet and harmonious in my church, and I am thankful for these things; but souls are not converted to God, my people are not awakened to a concern about salvation. I am spending my strength for nought, and labouring in vain; I am wearing out life without fruit that will follow me into eternity, and be my crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ Jesus." This is true; and a melancholy truth it is. And it is a confession which many ministers would have to make, a lamentation which they would have to utter, if they were duly alive to the nature and importance of the great work they have to do, and were anxiously concerned about its results. An unconverting ministry is a fruitless one.

In considering a want of success attending the ministry of the Word, something no doubt must be set down to the sovereignty of God, but far more to the defects, the negligence, the indolence of man. It seems to be everywhere taken for granted in the Scriptures, that the right means for conversion will be followed by the intended result. The declaration, that "Paul plants, and Apollos waters, while God gives the increase," is not designed to repress, but to encourage, hope. All ministers would be more useful if they took the proper means to obtain usefulness. To appeal to facts; are not those most useful who are most anxious, laborious, and wise in their endeavours to be useful? And are not they most useful in those periods of their ministry, when

they lay themselves out most assiduously for this purpose? The gospel is adapted to convert souls; God is willing to convert souls; the Spirit is poured out to convert souls; and where proper means are earnestly used for this purpose, souls, in greater or less numbers, are converted. How is it, then, that under the ministry of some men, souls are not converted by an instrumentality intended by God to accomplish this end, and withal so adapted to it? That in innumerable cases it is not secured is too evident to be denied.

This is a matter so intensely interesting, so infinitely important, that it should become a subject of anxious research; and for the solution of this difficulty, I here propose some questions. Is the doctrine of conversion understood and admitted to be scriptural? Would it not appear from a great deal of the preaching we hear in this day, that even some men reputedly orthodox, some ministers professedly evangelical, begin, if not to repudiate, yet so to modify, the doctrine of conversiou, as to take away its very essence? Does the fact of man's fallen corrupt nature, and the necessity of that great change which the Scriptures designate the new birth, occupy that place in modern preaching which it ought to do, and which it used to do, in the times of Whitfield and his immediate successors? Has it indeed in the creed of some modern preachers the place which belongs to it?

The conversion of the unregenerate, as a specific object, seems to be almost entirely left out in some men's preaching. Ah! so was it not in the preaching of holy Baxter! "I confess," said he, in his "Reformed Pastor," a book which we ministers ought often to read, "I am forced frequently to neglect that which should

tend to the further increase of knowledge in the godly, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Many a time have I known that I had some hearers of higher fancies, that looked for rarities, and were addicted to despise the ministry if I told them not somewhat more than ordinary: and yet I could not find it in my heart to turn from the observation of the necessities of the impenitent for the humouring of those, nor to leave speaking to the apparently miserable for their salvation, to speak to such novelists, no; nor so much as should otherwise be done to the weak for their confirmation and increase of grace. He that will let a sinner go to hell for want of speaking to him, doth set less by souls than the Redeemer of souls did. O, therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whoever you pass over, forget not poor souls that are under the curse and condemnation of the law, and may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change do not take place. O, care for the impenitent, and ply the great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone!"

It is not intended by these remarks to affirm that conversion is the whole of salvation, and should therefore be the sole subject of the ministry. Regeneration is only one part of salvation. Justification by faith, sanctification in all its branches by the Holy Spirit, consolation for the afflicted, all the virtues of a robust and healthy piety, must be inculcated from the pulpit, by the man of God who is thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Salvation is a word which comprehends all these, and every faithful minister must seek to build up his flock upon their holy faith, leading them to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience,

godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. He must lead them on from first principles, and not be always laying the foundations of the superstructure of personal godliness. There are the young men and the fathers to be fed with knowledge of a higher kind. An edifying ministry, as well as a converting one, must be maintained.

This is all true; but the preacher must begin with conversion. His hearers cannot grow, if they do not live; cannot go forward in the way of truth and holiness, if they do not enter it. His first great object should therefore be conversion. It should be in his heart intensely to long for this definite object; in his mind to devise means for accomplishing it; and in his sermons and general conduct to seek it. "I am pleased," he should say, "with the respect, affection, and attendance of my people; but I want, I long, I pray for their conversion."

And here a question arises, how this should be sought. There are two ways of doing it.

By the public preaching of the Word. It is the preaching of the cross that is "the power of God unto salvation." It is almost impossible to over-estimate the importance of preaching. But then it must be preaching adapted to produce conversion. All truths are important; all must be inculcated; but all are not equally adapted to promote specific ends. There are very many subjects in the Scriptures which, as matters of revelation, are of importance, and ought to be explained; but they are not all specially adapted, or intended, to promote conversion. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" one part "for doctrine," another "for reproof," another "for correc-

tion," another "for instruction in righteousness." Let me now, therefore, go on to consider what truths are adapted for conversion. This is the more necessary to be examined, as it is to be feared that some modern sermonising is little likely to accomplish this end. There is a great deal of abstract and sensible discussion, much fine thinking, able disquisition, eloquent descant, interesting analysis, sound argument, instructive exegesis, and poetic imagination. And no doubt all these things are very agreeable, desirable, and in some sort useful. They should have their place in the pulpit. It is a thinking age, and its demands should be met by the preacher. I am very far from inculcating the eternal repetition of a few elementary truths, in a loose, unstudied, declamatory style of composition. Our congregations are better educated, trained more to habits of thinking, and furnished with more information than they were, and cannot be satisfied with endless reiteration, and mere common place ideas. They want food for their minds; thoughts, not words only; teaching that will give thoughtful men something to employ their intellects, while it will at the same time sanctify their hearts and regulate their lives. Never was there such a demand for intellectual power in the pulpit as now. Let the demand be met in a legitimate way; but in endeavouring to please the intellect, let us not forget the conversion of the soul. We are not so much philosophers, lecturers, orators, scholars, for man as a rational creature; as preachers to man as a lost sinner; and our object should be so to meet his demands in the first-mentioned character, as never for a moment to lose sight of his necessities in the latter.

In all preaching there should be a prevalence of the

converting element; that is, of the truths, and the manner of treating them, which are likely to rouse the hearer to the state of his soul; to show him his condition as a sinner; to awaken a deep solicitude for his eternal welfare, by convincing him of his danger; to make him feel the necessity of repentance and faith; and to urge him to flee without delay to Christ for salvation. Almost any truth of the Bible may be so handled as to lead to this. And we are sometimes surprised to find what subjects the Spirit, in his sovereign agency, employs for the purpose of producing conviction and conversion. Some preachers may discuss the most likely subjects so coldly as to produce no interest in the minds of their hearers; while others, by holy skill and earnestness may make almost any truth bear upon the conscience, and awaken solicitude. Still this does not disprove the assertion that some truths are more adapted to convert the soul than others. The preaching that is destitute of them, must be considered as deplorably deficient. I do not mean that it is necessary in every sermon to state the plan of salvation; or to seek conversion as the end of every discourse. For my own part I think this calculated to deprive the gospel of its proper effect by the familiarity produced by constant repetition. Yet conversion should never be long out of the preacher's mind, nor the truths adapted to promote it long absent from his sermons.

In inquiring what these truths are, and settling with ourselves what kind of preaching is likely, by the blessing of God, to convert sinners, we may gain much information by referring to those preachers who have been most successful in this way; and also to those books which have been most honoured of God for this

purpose. If we go back to the times of our Puritan and Nonconformist ancestors, and read the sermons of Howe, Manton, Clarkson, Flavel, and especially of Baxter, men who were so eminently blessed in their day; or if we refer to Whitfield and Wesley, and the whole Methodistic school; or study the American pulpit, as set forth in the sermons of President Davies and Jonathan Edwards; or that of our own country, in the succeeding period, as upheld by Bradley, Parsons, Chalmers and M'Cheyne; or if we look at those living preachers who have been most honoured of God in the way of conversion, we can be at no loss to learn what kind of preaching is likely to be followed with these blessed results. In all these instances we see a great prevalence of the converting element, the necessity of conviction, repentance, faith, and the new birth.

But there is another way of arriving at this conclusion, and that is by considering the books which have been most successful in accomplishing these ends. Now, as I would not silence all preaching but that which seeks this object, so neither would I place in an index expurgatorius all books which do not aim at this. That were preposterous and absurd. We should be thankful to God for our abundant, varied, and excellent religious literature. A well-selected and well-stored library of doctrinal, controversial, exegetical, and practical theology, is one of the richest, noblest, and sublimest treasures upon earth. By those precious volumes, the ministry is furnished for the pulpit, the polemic for controversy, the active Christian for spiritual life, and the suffering believer for scenes of sorrow and distress. All honour to the men who have supplied us with these inestimable treasures, by which they being

dead yet speak to us! And honour be to those also of our own day, who are accumulating, by the productions of their minds and of their pens, the opulence of sacred thought! But I am now inquiring after the means of producing a specific result, a result of infinite moment, and that is, "What are the works which God has blessed for saving souls?" In former times there were Baxter's "Call," and Alleine's "Alarm to the Unconverted," and Boston's "Four-fold State." Then came that admirable work, notwithstanding its too systematic arrangement of the beginning and growth of personal godliness, Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul:" later still, and nearer our own times, Witherspoon "On Regeneration," Wilberforce's "Practical View," the publications of the Religious Tract Society, Pike's "Persuasives to Early Piety," Dr. Redford's "Great Change," Mr Newman Hall's "Come to Jesus," and his Father's "Sinner's Friend." And there is another publication to which I hope I shall not be deemed wanting in modesty if I allude, I mean "The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation directed and encouraged." It is not the indulgence of a spirit of vain glory, as He can witness who searches all hearts; nor is it the obtrusion of my gratitude to God upon public notice, for the honour he has put upon that work, which leads me now to refer at some length to the circulation and success of that little unpretending volume. I have other, higher, and holier objects in view, in thus bringing forward my own work. In this country its circulation has reached more than half a million; and in America, to perhaps a greater number. It has been translated, without any interference or suggestion of mine, into twelve languages. Its success in the conver-

sion of souls surpasses my conception. One instance out of hundreds, if not thousands, may be mentioned. In one of the back settlements of America, where no minister had ever settled, an individual had a copy of the work, and it was lent from one to another; and it awakened so general a solicitude about salvation, that twenty-seven persons dated their conversion from the perusal of that solitary book. The accounts of the instances of its usefulness that have been sent to me would fill a volume, and do fill me with wonder, gratitude, and praise. I feel humbly, yet thankfully, the conviction, that if I had lived for no other purpose than to write that tract, I should have existed for a most momentous purpose. And why, I again ask, do I thus advert to that work? Simply and exclusively to illustrate my present subject, the means which God blesses for the conversion of souls. Let that work be examined, and it will be seen in a moment that it contains no profound logic; no display of rhetoric; no lofty theology; no poetic imagination; no novel speculation; in short, no intellectual ability of any kind whatever; nothing but a simple, intelligible statement of gospel truth, made so plain that "he that runs may read, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein," and enforced with an affectionate earnestness that makes the reader feel the author is concerned for his salvation. It is a book so purely elementary and alphabetic in its character, that almost any one who is at all accustomed to commit his thoughts to paper, and who knows the way of salvation and the workings of the sinner's heart, could have written it. Apart from its adaptation to the end which it contemplates, and the success which has followed it, it reflects no honour upon its author, entitles

him to no praise, and confers upon him no literary glory. Yet it has been wonderfully owned of God, and blessed for the accomplishment of his purposes of love and mercy to the children of men.

What then are the truths which "The Anxious Inquirer" exhibits, and which, under God, give it such power over the sinner's mind and heart? Man's ruin by sin, his redemption by Christ, his regeneration by the Spirit, with all that is necessary to direct, encourage, and help him to put his trust in the Saviour. Within how narrow a compass, and in what simple truths, do the topics lie, which God usually blesses for the conversion of sinners! My reasoning, then, from the usefulness of "The Anxious Inquirer," and other similar works, is this; that it may be fairly inferred, the same truths directed to the soul through the ear by preaching, may be expected to produce the same blessed result as they do, when directed to the soul through the eye, by means of books. If these truths, when presented by a book, convert the soul, they may be expected to produce the same result when presented in a sermon. It is by truth that God effects the great change, whether that truth is conveyed by a book read or a sermon heard; and by truth in its own nature adapted to produce that effect. The advantage, in the way of impressing truth upon the mind, is altogether on the side of preaching. The soul of man is usually much more moved by what he hears than by what he reads, especially when he hears it in a public assembly, and has all the aids of sympathy and the solemnities of time and place to fix the attention and deepen the impression. If then, the simple truths set forth in "The Anxious Inquirer," so affect the mind when

read in the silence and solitude of the closet, what results might not be expected from those same truths, when published by an impressive oratory from the pulpit, and with all the auxiliaries supplied by the house of God, and a listening congregation. It is well, proper, and necessary for a minister to study books of learned criticism, profound theology, and controversial divinity. He must go and sit at the feet of the masters in Israel, and become as versed as he may and practicable, in all the sacred literature of the age. But it would be a profitable exercise for him occasionally to take up and study the most elementary treatises which God has honoured for the conversion of souls, and with a docile mind, a mind anxious to become proficient in the art of winning souls to Christ, learn from them how to wield the weapons of his warfare. A person of inquisitive mind, who has heard of the extraordinary success of any implement, say of husbandry, or any other line which happens to be his own, takes it up, if he has an opportunity, and says to himself, "What are the principle, construction, mode of action, and adaptation of this article? What is the secret of its success?" He is not deterred by its apparent simplicity from minutely examining it. That very simplicity commends it to his attention. He wants to use it. He is solicitous to turn it to his own advantage. In like manner, ministers should take up any work that has been unusually successful in conversion, and say, "What, under God, is the secret of the usefulness of this book?"

The same remark applies to preachers as to books. It is well occasionally to have our minds elevated, our

powers taxed, our ambition fired, by listening to one of those great sermons which are delivered on particular occasions by our most distinguished preachers. But it is far more desirable and important for ministers sometimes to place themselves under the teaching of a servant of the cross, who, though making no pretensions to a high order of intellectuality, or a profound habit of thought, is well skilled in the blessed art of winning souls to Christ. Often our young ministers are too eager to hear, and too ambitious to emulate, our great preachers, rather than our good ones; and perhaps those distinguished men too often preach great sermons rather than good ones. It is not to be expected nor desired that they who preach as none, or few others can, should always descend to the level of ordinary minds; but if, on public occasions, they sometimes exhibited their greatness more obviously in connection with usefulness; if they united fervour with grandeur, and set their younger brethren an example of intense earnestness and dignified simplicity, would they not confer a richer benefit upon the church and the world, than by one of those excessively elaborated and abstract discourses, of necessity read from notes, which seem fitted rather for a book than a sermon? It has sometimes occurred to me, that our more distinguished preachers have a vast responsibility attaching to them. They never appear on public occasions without being followed by many of their juniors and inferiors in point of talent, who are apt to regard them with admiration, as models for their own imitation; and who, while the strains of lofty, though perhaps comparatively inefficient eloquence are flowing from their lips, feel a swelling ambition in their souls

to go and do likewise. If these young men were only stimulated to diligence by these displays of talent, they might be greatly benefited by them; but, unfortunately, they are often led astray to attempt what is far above them, and seek to be great, without the ability for greatness. Thus, their motives are corrupted, and, in seeking after splendour and elaboration, they lose at once the desire and the means of being useful. Hence, let our pulpit magnates take heed what examples they set, for they have all their imitators. What an example did Doddridge give, when surrounded by his brethren he addressed to them that wonderfully pathetic and powerful sermon on "The Guilt and Danger of Neglecting Souls!"

There have been men of whose soundness of doctrine, and even earnest desire to be useful in the salvation of souls, there could exist no doubt, but whose habits of thought were so lofty, so far above the minds of the generality of their audience, and who found it so absolutely difficult, if not impossible, to descend to the level of ordinary minds, that their preaching, however useful in other ways, was attended with small results in that of conversion. These men have themselves been aware of their deficiency, and bitterly bewailed it. The late Dr. M'All was a remarkable instance of this. Dr. Wardlaw, in his review of the life and character of that illustrious man prefixed to his published sermons, says, "It will hardly, I presume, admit of a doubt, that in the general style of his preaching, there was more than enough of what has been, not inappropriately, called 'shooting over the heads' of his hearers. This might, in many instances, be owing to the forgetting that his own mind was not a fair standard of estimate for the general mind

of a congregation; and that what was to him familiar, even as the alphabet of knowledge, might be far above the range of even well-educated minds that could not compete with his gigantic powers, and were strangers to his habits of thought." It was not, however, so much the abstruseness of the subjects, the severity of his logic, or the depth and abstract nature of his thoughts, which rendered Dr. M'All's preaching so comparatively inefficient in the way of conversion, as must be apparent to all who have read his printed discourses, as the generalities of the topics, the excess of beautiful, eloquent illustration, and the great want of direct aim at the heart and conscience of the sinner; in short, the lack of that simplicity of representation on the subject of sin and salvation, which should ever characterise the preaching of the Gospel. The natural result of this in his case was that his preaching was not very useful to conversion. He knew, confessed, and lamented this. He often referred to it, and was wont to say to his friends, "I have admiration enough, but I want to see conversion and edification." He spoke of some neighbouring ministers, whose churches, he said, resembled a garden which the Lord had blessed; but added, that his emotions, in making the comparison, partook of a gladness for them that absorbed his sorrow for himself. "I remember," says one of his friends, "on one occasion, after a brilliant speech from himself, he listened to a much plainer and less oratorical brother, whose address, however, seemed much more penetrating on the minds of the audience, and produced on their countenances an appearance of being deeply affected. At that moment, the speaker, hearing a loud sobbing behind him, turned round. It was M'All. 'Ah,' said he, afterward, 'I

would give the world to be able to produce that effect in such a legitimate way.' To another ministerial friend he said, 'I care nothing what people think of or say of my abilities, if I may but be useful to souls;' and once, with swelling indignation, 'God knows I do not want their applause, I want their salvation.'" It is perfectly evident from this affecting account, as well as from a perusal of his printed sermons, and the testimony of those who were favoured to hear him preach, that, notwithstanding his knowledge of the gospel of our salvation, and his belief of the essential doctrines of divine truth, combined with his intense desire to be useful in the conversion of sinners, he did not well know how to accomplish this blessed effect himself, and really felt the deficiency under which he laboured in this respect. He could convince the understanding by logic; he could delight the imagination by poetic representation; he could touch the feelings by tender and beautiful description; but he did not know how to grapple with the conscience well. It was not his to bring the gospel of Christ in all its simplicity down to the level of ordinary minds, and to enforce it upon their acceptance by a mode of representation so plain as not to be mistaken, and so earnest as not to be resisted. He could and did descant upon the gospel so loftily and so beautifully as to fill with rapture those who already knew, believed, and loved it; but how to bring it into contact with the hard heart and benumbed conscience of the callous transgressor; how to make it obvious to the dark intellect of the mass of impenitent sinners; how first to awaken and then to relieve the solicitude expressed in the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" how to meet the case of the anxious

inquirer after salvation, he knew less than some who were greatly his inferiors.

Is there not a very considerable class of preachers, who notwithstanding their undoubted orthodoxy and some desire to be useful, accomplish but little in the way of conversion? Their sermons are not wanting in evangelical truth. They preach the gospel, but it is in so abstract and theoretical a way as to be little calculated to awaken the sympathies of the heart, or call into activity the functions of the conscience. Their discourses are rather elaborate essays for the people to hear, than direct and pungent addresses for them to feel. You would suppose, in hearing them, either that that there were no sinners in the congregation to be converted, or that they did not desire their conversion, or did not know how to attempt it. They regale their congregations, disciplined in the art and practice of listening to sermons as amateurs, Sunday after Sunday, with a rich intellectual treat of sacred eloquence; and they enable even the pious mind to luxuriate amidst religious truth, set forth in an elegant style of composition; but they know not how to storm the citadel of the soul, and compel it to surrender to Christ. They can teach the higher themes of religion to the more advanced learners in the school of Christ, but they cannot come down to the level of a little child's capacity, and with patient effort teach him the alphabet. They cannot, as preachers, act like the poet of our sanctuary, who could teach sages philosophy, and write catechisms for infants, compose divine songs which babes might lisp, and hymns which an archangel might sing without lowering himself.

A deplorable want of directness characterises much

of the preaching of the present day. The earnest appeal, the startling remark, the pointed and pithy observation, the pathetic expostulation, the awakening interrogation, the careful discrimination, which, as Mr Hall says, "shall enable every individual to know where to class himself, and make his conscience feel the hand of the preacher searching it:" these things, which characterised so strongly the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley, and the early Methodists, and which must characterise all useful preaching, are, to a considerable extent, wanting in the modern pulpit, and have been succeeded, it is admitted, by a more elaborate and ornate style of composition; but still by a cold and heartless exhibition of the great truths of salvation, which plays like fireworks round the imagination, but enters not the heart and conscience to purify them with the fire that comes down from heaven. I wonder not that some preachers of the gospel are not useful in the conversion of souls. It would be a wonder if they were.

At the same time I will readily admit, that we are but incompetent judges wherein usefulness consists. Men whose preaching is not adapted to effect conversion, may often be useful in preparing for it. They may contend against the scepticism infidelity and heresy of the age; they may destroy the outworks by which the human heart is defended against the power of the truth; they may answer objections, beat down prejudices, and awaken a general interest in religion; they may thus break up fallow ground, and make way for the sower to cast the seed of the kingdom. In these and other ways they may lay extensive foundations for a superstructure of future benefit, even

though their own labours in word and doctrine, how sound and faithful soever, may not be honoured by many real conversions. "On these conversions, however," says Dr. Wardlaw, "every servant of Christ should set his heart, and beware of laying any flattering unction to his soul, while no such tokens of the divine blessing upon his ministry present themselves. He should be instant for them in season and out of season, pleading for God with men; and that he may succeed, pleading for men with God, solicitous, whatever be the result, to 'deliver his own soul,' and to be able with truth to say, 'I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.'"

It is surprising how some preachers can be contented to go on year after year without evidence of any conversions, and without any inquiry into the cause of their want of usefulness. Ought they not to institute a most rigid enquiry into their ministerial and pastoral habits, in order to ascertain whether there is anything in their mode of preaching, or their official conduct, which hinders their success? Can they really understand the design of their office, and be aware of the awful and eternal consequences which must in every case result from its failure, and remain satisfied, though none are converted by their ministrations from the error of their ways? What! go carelessly and contentedly forward, while the souls of their hearers are perishing in their sins, and while their own ministry is only a savour of death unto death to them! Is this watching for souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief? Can that man, who is not anxious about the salvation of the souls of his hearers,

and who mourns not with bitter grief and disappointment over his want of success, and does not sorrowfully and honestly inquire into the causes of his failure, pretend to have the mind of Christ, or any sympathy with him in his tears agonies and death for souls? "A minister is either the greatest of fools and the most baseless of braggarts, or he holds a commission which to hold, and be careless while holding it, furnishes one of the darkest proofs and the most guilty manifestations of human depravity. His office itself is either the wildest extravagance, or it is the most solemn and weighty of human thoughts." And are there not many of us who should seriously consider this? Are any of us sufficiently earnest about conversion? Does not the subject press far too lightly on our minds, hearts, and consciences? Do we really believe the principles we profess concerning the soul, and the soul's salvation or damnation? If so, let us act up to our principles, and be anxious restless and laborious for direct and palpable conversions. When such are effected, then, and then only, do we obtain the chief end of our ministry. The grand design of the gospel in regard to men, being their conversion to God and its consequences; the primary element in the usefulness of its ministers, must consist in the accomplishment of this purpose.

Can it then be necessary to stir up the pure minds of my brethren, by way of remembrance, to make this the chief end of their ministry, and to consider nothing done effectually for any of their hearers till this is done? Let them most solemnly consider what, in the way of the final issue, is involved in every case of true regeneration, and every case of final impenitence. Let them ponder those weighty expressions of the apostle, "He

that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Shall save a soul from death! What an achievement! A greater result than saving from mere temporal death the inhabitants of a town, a city, a nation, or even a world! The salvation of a single soul from death is an event which no mind can fully comprehend but that of the omniscient and eternal God. It is a blessing infinite in value, and eternal in duration. What are the applauses of a congregation for that which is eloquent, profound, or novel; what the smiles and compliments of a gratified audience, from time to time, for that which is tasteful and interesting; what the popularity which fills a city, a denomination, or an age, with its fame, compared with saving a single soul from death? How soon will all these ephemeral rewards of our public labours wither like a garland in the sun, and perish for ever! The only result of our ministry which will follow us to heaven and endure through eternity, is the conversion of souls: and this will. Yes, it will flourish on our brow like a chaplet of amaranth, when not only the laurels that have been won by the conquerors in the world of art and the battle-fields of genius, but all the effects of their skill, shall have perished for ever in the last conflagration. While the very men that now praise our sermons, but are not converted by them, will, in another world, exchange their applause for censure, and be ready to vent their execrations upon us that we were not more intent upon their salvation, and did not labour more earnestly for it. How would it tend to elevate our aims, to enlarge our views, to purify our motives, and give intensity to our solicitude for the salvation of our hearers, did we more frequently and more earnestly

transfer our views from time to eternity! How would it quicken our endeavours after conversion, did we but look upon our congregations, not merely in the light of so many persons come to hear a sermon from our lips, and whom we were anxious to please by saying something which they would admire; but as so many lost souls brought together to hear from us words whereby they might be saved; as so many sinners gathered round our pulpit to learn the way of pardon; as so many unconverted persons collected to receive the truths whereby they might be regenerated; as so many immortal beings brought to us to be prepared for immortality itself! Each one of them has an eternal destiny awaiting him; and what that destiny will be, depends in some measure upon us. Such a view of our congregations would surely convince us that everything short of conversion is infinitely below the chief end of the ministry, and of the aim and ambition of those who are called to the discharge of its sacred functions.

Preaching, however, is not the only means by which conversion is to be sought by the ministers of the gospel; another well adapted, momentous, and I am sorry to add, much neglected method, is the careful and judicious treatment, by private and personal conversation, of individual cases of persons under religious concern. If we look at the practice of medical men in our hospitals, we find that they do not merely deliver clinical lectures in the wards, or addresses on the general principles of disease and healing; but that they individualise each one of their patients, and treat each separate case according to its nature and symptoms. Something like this, to a certain extent, for of course we cannot thus reach the whole congregation, ought to

be the practice of the ministers of the gospel. True it is, that the idiosyncracies in the spiritual condition of our hearers are not so numerous nor so obvious as those of the bodily sufferers in a hospital; nor do they depend quite so much upon our personal attention and peculiar treatment; but they are still very numerous, and need skilful and appropriate attention. It is a common fault of the ministry to be too much satisfied with preaching to the congregation, to the neglect of this dealing with individual cases in private. The sermon begins and ends the duty of some ministers. Even if people call upon them in solicitude about their souls, they scarcely like to be intruded upon and interrupted in their studies. They take no pains to become acquainted with the spiritual condition of their hearers, or even to ascertain the effect of their own sermons. Far be it from me to think or speak lightly of preaching, or of the necessity of close study in order to preach effectually. Nothing, not even the personal attention to the individual cases of the flock which I am now recommending, can excuse the neglect of this. But preaching is not every thing that is to be done by the ministers of the gospel, however they may do it. Much of the beneficial effect of this is lost for want of something else; and that is, the plan of personal intercourse illustrated so strikingly in Dr. Spencer's work.

It is utterly inconceivable that where the preaching is adapted to produce impression, and the preacher is really in earnest, none should be impressed by it. From every solemn and awakening discourse, many go away thoughtful and serious. Lost among the crowd of light and frivolous hearers which retire from the sanctuary,

there is here and there one to whose mind ideas have been given that were never there before, and that have awakened a new solicitude. The arrow shot at random has grazed or piereed the heart of some hitherto careless sinner. Nothing, however, is more evanescent than religious impressions, unless they are nourished and followed up by subsequent and appropriate means. Now the aim of the preacher should be, to come to the knowledge of those cases of incipient religious concern. To preach, and be careless about the result; to consider that we have done all when the sermon is ended, betrays a mind and heart deplorably wanting in ministerial solicitude. After sermons intended to awaken the careless and convert the impenitent, the earnest minister will say, "Have I not done some good to-day? Have not some been impressed and convinced? Can I have been so earnest, and have roused no slumbering conscience? Is it possible, or, at any rate, probable, that such truths can be preached altogether without effect?" Nor will he stop here, but will take some steps and some pains to ascertain the result. Perhaps no men are less inquisitive and laborious to find out the immediate position and practical results of their endeavours than preachers. Many a minister is really more useful than he supposes, and by searching out the fruit of his labours would have much discouragement removed from his mind, and a fresh stimulus given to his exertions. He would discover, did he search for them, many an inquirer after salvation, in whose soul the first conviction of sin was produced by sermons which he had almost forgotten he ever delivered. Now there are two ways of finding out such cases set forth in the following sketches.

I. By personal visits. Dr. Spencer marked in his own mind the cases of particular individuals, and visited them at their own homes. I am aware that in large congregations, and large towns also, this can not be easily accomplished. Yet it was accomplished in his case, in the large and crowded city of New York, or, what is much the same, in Brooklyn. Were we so disposed we could all do more in this way than we are in the habit of doing. We sometimes see in our congregations, persons evidently under deep impression from the sermon. We cannot mistake the fact that our address is telling upon their hearts and consciences. The fixedness of their attention, the seriousness of their countenance, the tears in their eyes, prove this. They are also regular in their attendance, and we see this appearance of solicitude and deep interest Sabbath after Sabbath. Here then are, or ought to be, objects of our attention, care, and solicitude. Without loss of time, we should endeavour by some means to gain a knowledge of, and access to, such persons. This may in many cases be difficult, and will always require considerable caution. In addition to the difficulty of their being in situations all but inaccessible to us, it is a somewhat delicate matter to speak on the subject of religion to those who have not first spoken to us. Much tact and prudence, and much kindness of manner, are requisite in introducing such a topic as the spiritual state of another person's mind. Every thing rudely obtrusive, harshly severe, or offensively inquisitorial, must be avoided. It may be thought, and perhaps there is some truth in the idea, that such a method of doing good requires a peculiar talent which all do not possess. That some have a greater facility in this method, and

can conduct it with greater ease grace and acceptableness than others, may be granted: but most ministers, could they be persuaded to adopt it, would find they have some ability for it, and that practice would give them an aptitude for it. It so happens that the wealthier classes are more difficult of access for such labours of love, than the poor. We all find greater embarrassment in addressing them than we do their hard-working neighbours. The fact is, we want, first of all, the deep solicitude for their salvation, and then the moral courage, which are requisite for such offices of ministerial fidelity; these, did we possess them, would break down the barriers which thus hinder our usefulness. No doubt in some cases there would be, in the persons addressed, a shrinking even from the most cautious, kind, and respectful manner. In such instances, it would be injudicious and injurious to press the matter too urgently. Admirable instances of this will be found in the work now introduced to the reader. But where solicitude has been really awakened, and the soul is moved with the anxiety implied in that great question, "What shall I do to be saved?" our conversation would generally be most welcome and most beneficial; the awakened sinner would receive and hail us as a messenger of mercy and a comforter of the afflicted. Let any one imagine how, when the timidity and modest reserve of such a person are overcome, his mind will be soothed, relieved, and guided by the counsels of a skilful pastor. In dealing with such, it is necessary not only to communicate our thoughts, but we must know theirs. There are in many cases some false views, some defects of duty, some secret faults, some cherished prejudices, some perplexing difficulties, some groundless objections,

which keep them from the reception of the truth, and from peace and joy in believing, which no mere general exhibition of the Gospel can remove, but which may all be met by private conversation. It is a common thing for anxious inquirers to suppose there is some peculiarity in their case, which discourses from the pulpit do not meet. Private intercourse brings out all these matters, and enables a judicious guide to remove these stumbling-blocks out of the way. Half an hour's conversation with such individuals may be more beneficial than scores of sermons. In vain is the gospel heard, till this subjective obstacle to its reception is displaced.

How much do we all lose for want of this notice and treatment of single cases! How much of our ministry is unsuccessful for want of this kind, judicious, and persevering attention to individuals! True, there is not the excitement which is produced in our minds by the public address to the congregation; true, there is often more difficulty felt and more patience required in dealing with one single soul, entangled and bewildered in the meshes of ignorance, doubt, and despondency, than in composing and delivering a whole discourse from the pulpit; true, it might seem a wider sphere of usefulness to touch by one sermon hundreds of minds at once. Yes, but how many of these minds are in a state not to be efficiently touched by that sermon, while they can be, and would be, efficiently touched by the private conversation. We little know what hearts in our congregation are longing, almost to bursting, for a little personal intercourse with a kind and judicious minister. I can recollect the early days of my own conversion to God, when I yearned for such an interview with the minister, and stood at the corner of the street, watching him with tears to his

own home, silently exclaiming, "Oh, that he would speak to me;" and yet, had not the courage to go to him. Had he only given a public notice that he would be glad to converse at his vestry or his home with any who were anxiously inquiring after salvation, I should have hailed the notice as water to a thirsty soul. This shows that ministers should let it be known and felt that they are easy of access to all who are burdened with the solicitudes of an incipient conversion. They should, they must, and they can if they try, find out such cases; they are not faithful if they neglect to do so, and cannot be said to watch for souls as they that must give account. The scrutiny which Christ will make at the last day will not only be into the manner in which we have dealt with the congregation as a whole, but with the individuals of which it is composed. It is an alarming idea that our responsibility extends to every single soul.

If it were not thought too familiar an illustration, I would say that ministers, as fishers of men, are too exclusively bent on casting the net among a shoal, and drawing in many at one throw, and are not given enough to patiently angling for the solitary fish. Single souls are thought, if not beneath our notice, yet below our zeal. Have we forgotten our great Pattern, who sat for a whole hour perhaps, or even more, by the side of a well, and laboured kindly and condescendingly for the salvation of one individual, and that a female of indifferent character? Or have we overlooked the zeal of the ancient Pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte? Or may we not receive instruction from the parable of the lost sheep, upon perceiving the solicitude and toil of the good Shepherd to restore the solitary wanderer to the fold? And if all this be not

enough, let us learn from the conduct of the blessed angels who rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. It is this anxiety for the conversion of single souls by conversation in private, more than ardour in the pulpit, that tests the sincerity of our concern, and the purity of our motives. Many things, apart from the higher objects of pulpit ministration, concur to excite our zeal in public; only one, and that of a right kind, can be supposed to operate in private.

II. But there is a second method of getting at the case of individual inquirers, and which in fact makes way for the one already mentioned, which I am happy to believe is becoming more common than it once was, and is a great advance in the usefulness of our ministry; and that is the holding of meetings for such persons collectively and exclusively. During all the earlier years of my ministry, I contented myself with being in the vestry to converse with such of the congregation as wished to enter into the fellowship of the church, at certain times, which were announced on the previous Sabbath from the pulpit. On conversing with a friend * respecting our plans of pastoral labour, he mentioned to me one of his own, which was to give notice from the pulpit, that he would be at his vestry on a particular evening, not to converse individually with persons recently brought into a state of spiritual anxiety, but merely to address them collectively, in a way suited to their state of mind. "For," said he, "a fear of being interrogated would keep many away, who would come to be addressed with others." I was at the time much impressed by the judiciousness of the remark and the plan, and determined to try the experiment. After a

* Dr. Henry Burder.

discourse of more than ordinary solemnity, and apparently producing a deeper impression than usual, I gave out a notice from the pulpit, that on a particular evening I should be at the school-room to address those who had been affected by the sermon, or who by any previous means had been brought into a state of serious concern for their souls. I took care also to intimate that I should meet them, merely to speak to them collectively, and not to interrogate or examine them individually. On the appointed evening I went to the school-room, not knowing whether any one would be there. To my delight and surprise, I found about a hundred persons, or probably more, certainly not less, waiting in silence, and with apparent solemnity, for my appearance. The scene quite overcame me. It was some time before I could command my feelings to address them. "Here," thought I to myself, "are more than one hundred persons come to night, most of them with the question 'Sir, what shall we do to inherit eternal life?' and here I am to direct them into the way of salvation! How momentous my duty! How responsible my situation! How eventful the service of this evening! It was evident that great impression was produced by what I said to them, and I gave notice that I should continue the meetings for some weeks to come. Of course it was not to be supposed that all of them were under intelligent and deep solicitude for salvation. I had no doubt however, many were. After six or seven meetings I told them that I should no longer continue those addresses, but wished to converse with them individually, and for that purpose would be at the vestry on certain days, which I mentioned. By having met me so frequently, they had acquired con-

fidence to accept the invitation and speak to me; and out of the whole number, about seventy came to me, and the result was that forty were brought into fellowship. I felt that a new view of my pastoral functions and obligations had been given me; that a new means of usefulness had been put into my hands; and a new era had commenced in my ministry. So it proved. This plan I continue to the present time, in connection with my excellent and active colleague. Every now and then, at intervals of various lengths, I give out a notice similar to that which I have mentioned, and generally find from thirty to sixty present. My great object in these meetings is, of course, not merely to cherish feeling and deepen impression, but to convey instruction; for which purpose I sometimes distribute a suitable tract, (the same to each individual), and enlarge upon it, and request those present to read it seriously while my explanations are fresh in their recollection.

The benefits conferred by this method are acknowledged with great thankfulness by those who come from the class into the church. At such times, and with such an audience, a minister may descend to a familiarity of illustration, and use an unchecked repetition of the same idea in various lights, which he could not in the pulpit. Our object should be, not only to make real or even earnest Christians, but intelligent ones; for which purpose these meetings are admirably adapted. My experience so perfectly convinces me of their adaptation to usefulness, and of their being one great part of wisdom in winning souls to Christ, that I do not see how without them we can make full proof of our ministry; and I therefore, cannot too earnestly recommend them to my brethren. I am aware that some are so exceedingly

sensitive as to everything that savours of cant, and so morbidly jealous of all innovations upon established usages, that they instinctively shrink from the phrase, "Meetings for Inquirers." Well, let them drop the designation if they please, and use any periphrasis to describe the thing, only let them adopt it. Do they believe in the doctrine of conversion? Do they wish to produce it? Do they think that anxiety of mind usually precedes it? Do they suppose that in their congregation there are any waking up, it may be by their sermons, to solicitude about eternal realities? If they assent to all this, (and what minister is he who does not?) then surely they must admit the desirableness of bringing out those awakened minds, and carrying on the work of grace in their souls. Can they devise a more apt method for doing this than that which I now recommend? Let them show me a more excellent way, and, old as I am in the ministry of the Word, I will adopt it; for never at any former period of my life was I more impressed with the idea that the conversion of souls is the great end of the Christian ministry. Every thing short of this I feel to be utterly unsatisfying.

Perhaps it will be alleged that this plan may suit large congregations; but that what is necessary for them may not be called for by smaller ones. That the number of persons to whom this plan applies is of course greater in the one case than in the other, is admitted; but are there ten, are there five, are there two, of this description to be found in a congregation? Then it is worth while to hold a meeting for them. If not, then let the personal visits already described be resorted to. All ministers must individualize, for all

have some in their congregations who need separate attention.

I have no doubt it will be said by some, that they have not time for the individualizing process, and the practice of dealing with separate cases of religious concern, recommended under the former head, which must follow the address to the collective body enjoined under the present one. Just as well, or nearly so, might it be said by a physician at one of our hospitals, that he has time only for clinical lectures and general directions; but none at all to attend to the individual cases of disease which are stretched upon the beds by which he is surrounded. No time! Why, what is our object? What the design of our ministry but to save souls? Is not this one way of saving them, and of giving additional efficacy to all other ways? No time? What, not to meet the anxious inquirer in his wanderings, and direct him to the cross! No time! What, not to relieve the solicitude we ourselves have awakened by our sermons! No time! What, not to watch for souls and thus to prepare for the account we must give of our ministry at the day of judgment! Can we find time for lecturing upon various topics, not perhaps connected with our ministry; for social intercourse; for general, perhaps light, reading; for politics; for recreation; and find none to meet the varied cases of incipient religious concern and distress which are to be found in our congregations? Can we, dare we, go to our Master and tell him we have not time to act the part of the good shepherd, and seek the solitary stray sheep in the wilderness? If one of these single cases of persons in solicitude about salvation, whose solicitude we hear

of, should turn out otherwise than at one time we hoped, and the individual after relapsing into his former unconcern, were in an agony of remorse, or with a sardonic tone of hardened indifference to say, "Why, when I was beginning to awake from carelessness, did you not give me your sympathy and help?" could we with an easy conscience, say, "I had no time?" What is our time for, if not for this work? If we neglect this, and are so taken up with general literature, study pursuits, social intercourse, or even with excessive elaboration in preparing sermons, may those words come to our ears with the power of thunder, and flash in our eyes with the piercing blaze of lightning, "Redeem time, from anything and everything, for the purpose of saving souls." God have mercy upon the minister, who says he has no time to save individual souls from death, and show him his fearful guilt, and give him repentance.

But there are others who excuse themselves from this work by the plea that they have no aptitude or tact for it. Before the validity of this plea is admitted, I would ask if they have ever tried it. Have they not contented themselves with preaching sermons, administering the sacraments, conversing, and that perhaps very perfunctorily, with those who called upon them, and never imitated the great and good Shepherd who came to seek as well as to save, and to seek in order to save, them that were lost? Let no man say he cannot do this till he has tried. I will admit, however, without hesitation, indeed it cannot be denied, that some have more ability than others for this duty. They can converse more freely with persons under anxiety than others; they have more penetration into the various idiosyncracies of enquirers, more discrimination of their differences,

more knowledge of their perplexities, more power to detect the subtle workings of their deceitful hearts. They are in fact more wise to win souls. They are like physicians whose experience has made them more skilful than others. This is conceded. But whence does this superior tact in dealing with individual souls arise? Partly, perhaps, from natural aptitude; but more from a deeper personal experience of the power of godliness, a more intense piety, a richer enjoyment of faith and the common salvation; from a more intimate acquaintance with all the stumbling-blocks to be gathered out of the sinner's way on approaching the cross; from a more intense longing after the salvation of souls; from a more unreserved consecration to the work; from a deeper conviction that this individualizing process is really essential to carrying out the purpose of the Christian ministry; from a greater willingness to redeem time from other occupations, that it may be employed in this way; from a more devoted study of all the workings of the human heart in its unconverted state, and in its transition, first from indifference to solicitude, and then from solicitude to settled faith and repose in Christ. This is the tact for dealing with individual souls, and this the method by which it may be obtained.

1. Let there be a more earnest, unquenchable, insatiable longing after the salvation of sinners, and a more studied and direct aim to accomplish it by seeking their conversion in our sermons. I say again there must be directness in our preaching. The converting element must prevail in it. Without this, it is not likely that we shall find persons to converse with.

2. Let there be a deep solemn conviction that this practice is our duty; that preaching, however excellent,

is not everything; but that, in addition, we must follow the stricken bleeding deer to the thicket; and that we can no more excuse ourselves from the latter effort than we can from the former.

3. Let us make the trial. In the practice of medicine, it is experience that produces skill. When a physician commences his profession, he begins with general principles; and as individual cases come before him, he applies his science to the symptoms of his patients. At first he is somewhat timid; he sometimes mistakes, but as his practice increases, his experience of course enlarges, and as a natural result he becomes more and more skilful. Tact, as it is called, is not so much the result of any natural or physical aptitude, though that may have something to do with it, as of application, observation, diligence, and experience.

4. This aptitude may also be acquired by the careful perusal of such works as this of Dr. Spencer's. To allude again to the medical profession, practitioners are guided not only by books of abstract principles, but by the records of particular cases. They see in them what treatment has been successful in certain diseases, and thus learn what methods to adopt when similar cases come into their own hands. Analogous to this is or should be the practice of ministers. We have not only valuable treatises on theology, but we now and then meet with a useful record, by some judicious hand, of the treatment of particular cases of religious concern. Some years ago, a very interesting volume was sent forth by Dr. Redford, entitled "The Pastor's Sketch Book," which contained many facts of this nature. We also find much of this in the biography of emi-

nently useful ministers; but I know of no work so entirely of such a character as this of Dr. Spencer's.

It will now be useful to consider briefly his methods of ministerial labour as they are set forth in this work. He was a popular and striking preacher, and might therefore have been likely to confine his exertions pretty much to the pulpit. A gifted preacher is certainly exposed to the temptation to rely almost exclusively upon his pulpit exercises, and to neglect the more private, but not less important, duties of the pastorate; forgetting that impressions made by sermons, however deep at the time, are very likely to be lost unless cherished by private and personal intercourse. Dr. Spencer appears to have been deeply imbued with the love of souls, intensely anxious for their salvation, and ever willing to endure any labours, and to make any sacrifices of his ease and time, to accomplish that object. He did watch for souls. It is deeply interesting, and should be stimulating to other ministers, to see him looking out for persons under religious concern, walking miles to call upon a single individual, repeating again and again his visits to the one object of his solicitude, and never giving them over till they were crowned with success, or rendered absolutely hopeless by hardened impenitence.

In his case we see one of the most beautiful examples of this attention to individual cases I have ever met with. It was not the large and listening audience only that moved his sympathies or roused and stimulated his energies, but the single heart-stricken sinner; nor was it that heart-stricken sinner only when found in the elegant drawing-room of a wealthier member of his flock, but when suffering amidst the squalid penury

of a garret. It was for souls he laboured and prayed, whether of the rich or the poor; for he knew that all were alike in the eye of God, and ought to be in his.

It is impossible in reading the cases which he has recorded not to be struck with his admirable tact in dealing with them individually, as well as with the general principles on which he acted. It has been thought by some that his methods were too uniform, and that his practice was a kind of spiritual empiricism, prescribing one method for all diseases. But it was just the plan of the apostle Paul. Wherever he went, and to whomsoever he addressed himself, he preached repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity knows but one method of cure for all spiritual diseases. The gospel is literally a "heal-all," an universal remedy. But did not Dr. Spencer study each case with great discrimination, and adapt with wonderful skill the grand catholicon to its peculiar symptoms? The following particulars appear to have constituted his theory and the manner in which he applied it, and must be adopted by all who would be useful in this way.

1. All men are to be viewed and dealt with as sinners against God, and therefore under the curse of his violated law, and also as partakers of a corrupt nature. This is neither to be concealed from them nor palliated. So that when an inquirer speaks of his actual sins, or his wicked heart, instead of being soothed or comforted by being told he is not quite so bad as he supposes, he is to be assured that in the sight of God he is more sinful than he is aware of, and that his wicked heart is more wicked than he supposes. His conviction must be deepened by his being shown the full extent of

his guilt, depravity, danger, and misery. Any attempt to palliate his sins and make him think better of himself, only tends to diminish his anxiety and wrap him up in self-righteousness.

2. As Christ by his atoning sacrifice has borne our sins, and is the sole mediator between God and man, the sinner, while he is to look into himself for conviction, and to the law for condemnation, is to be directed to look out of and away from himself, to Christ by faith for consolation. And as the penitent is ever prone to look in various ways to himself for something to relieve comfort and recommend him, great pains must be taken to fill his mind with the one thought of Christ as the only Saviour. Every effort must be made to fix his eye upon Christ, even as the eye of the serpent-bitten Israelite was fixed on the brazen serpent. Nothing is a more common working of self-righteousness than for the anxious inquirer to be ever looking to his own feelings, his own experiences, his own evidences as he calls them, for consolation, instead of directing his attention to Christ. He renounces dependence upon his external works, but not upon his internal feelings convictions and resolutions. It must be his minister's great concern to lead him out of all this to Christ; to turn his eye outward instead of inward.

3. The sinner is to be told that repentance and faith are his immediate duty; that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." He is ready to admit that it is a duty to trust in Christ at some time or other, but he does not feel the obligation of it as an immediate duty. Many things lead him to put it off from the present moment to a future time; he does not feel enough, he wants to know and feel that he believes

even before he does believe; he is not sufficiently convinced of sin, he can do nothing of himself, he must wait for the Spirit of God; he wants to know that he is a Christian; he thinks it so solemn a thing to repent and believe, that it requires time to deliberate upon it; he is looking into himself for marks and evidences, and wishes to find in them a warrant to come to Christ; he supposes that something will turn up in his history to tell him when it is time for him to believe and hope. In all these refuges of lies, running from one to the other, he is hiding himself from the duty of immediate faith. In opposition to all these pleas for delay, he is to be shewn they are the result of ignorance or the workings of self-righteousness, and he is to be pressed with his obligation to immediate surrender to God, by repentance and faith; and is to be told that faith will bring feeling, rather than feeling produce faith; that before he believes, he cannot know he is a Christian, for he cannot be one; that his warrant to come to Christ is not his own feelings of any kind, but Christ's invitation; and that this warrant authorizes his immediate application.

4. The sinner is to be dealt with as a rational creature, possessing all the natural faculties necessary to repentance and faith, and therefore as being capable of those states of mind, and both guilty and responsible to God for the want of them. At the same time he is to be treated as a creature that has lost all moral power, that is, all inclination, and is thus unable to repent, because destitute of all disposition to do so; and is to be reminded that he is dependent upon God's sovereign mercy for the grace indispensably necessary to repentance and faith. Hence he is to be urged, under the

former view of his condition, to repent and believe the Gospel; he is to be told that it is nothing but his own wicked heart that keeps him from repenting and believing, and his very pleas of inability are to be turned against him as proofs of his desperate wickedness; and yet he is to be told that nothing but divine grace, which God is under no obligation to impart beyond his own promise, will subdue his stubborn nature, and make him willing to repent and believe. For this grace he is to be urged immediately and earnestly to pray the prayer of faith, so far as regards believing that God is willing to grant him his Holy Spirit. So that he is to give all his energies to the great work of religion, but all in dependence upon the Spirit of God, which is to be thus sought by importunate and believing prayer.

5. True faith, or trust in Christ, will, in every case, be followed by its appropriate fruits; first peace, then love, and then holiness, and that where these do not follow, there is no faith. Faith without works is dead being alone, that is, it is no faith at all; and inquirers must be told that, where there is no peace, no relief for a burdened conscience, the cause of their distress is the want of faith. Instead of soothing them by referring them to their own experience, or comforting them with the idea that they are seekers after salvation, we should admonish them at once to believe the glad tidings of pardon and eternal life. Comforting men while they are in unbelief is a sad method of dealing with anxious souls.

6. These effects are to be looked for from judicious earnest attempts to save souls, whether in what are called times of revival or on ordinary occasions. Dr. Spencer was no enemy to the use, sometimes, of extra-

ordinary means for reviving the slumbering piety of an age or a church; but he evidently had no partiality for those periodical excitements which lead multitudes, both ministers and people, to think lightly of the ordinary means of grace, and to expect impressive and awakening services only in the time of revival. His dependence, under God, for success, was upon the stated services of the sanctuary; and his opinion was that any thing which led people or ministers to think lightly of them, and to rest their hopes upon an expected revival, was in the highest degree mischievous. And "the spiritual galvanism," as it has been not infelicitously called, of exciting revivalism, is pretty generally exploded by all denominations both in this country and in America, and the demand now is for a uniform healthy vigour, rather than for occasional spasmodic convulsions. It is very clear that such a system must soon wear out itself. For what is at first extraordinary, soon, by periodical repetition, becomes ordinary. The dependence of every minister for success, so far as instrumentality goes, must be upon the ordinary ministration of the Word. His whole ministry should be a reviving one. It should be his uninterrupted work to seek after the conversion of souls. Still, notwithstanding this, if at any time his church has sunk, or seems to be sinking, into a declining and lukewarm state, and he feels himself sinking with it, there is nothing irrational or unscriptural in his attempting, by some unusually solemn services, to arouse them and himself from their slumbers; to engage them to more earnest prayer; and to draw them into co-operation with him in his labours to seek the salvation of souls. I have seen the benefit of such services, and

therefore cordially approve and earnestly recommend them. But then they must be of such a kind as to lead neither himself nor his flock to think lightly of the usual and regular services of the sanctuary. Nor should they be of that exciting and stimulating nature, which, by the violence of their action, is sure to be followed by exhaustion and collapse. Their tendency should be to infuse vigour into ordinary services, and give a stronger and healthier pulse to the preaching of the pastor and the piety of his church, and not by a temporary feverish excitement to enfeeble both.

Such then were the principles and methods on which Dr. Spencer acted, as will be evident from the perusal of his pages. That he had extraordinary tact in this manner, I repeat, must be evident. How ready and how appropriate were his answers to the queries, his refutations of the objections, and his solution of the difficulties, of those who came to him under religious concern, or whose stubborn unbelief he sought to subdue! What an enviable felicity he possessed in smoothing the way of the sinner to the cross, and guiding the wandering spirit through the labyrinth of his own perplexities to Jesus! Few may hope to possess it in the same degree, yet all who seek it may expect it in some useful measure.

In going through the cases as they are here recorded, the reader will find an occasional abruptness, harshness, and even severity of language and manner, which has the appearance of breaking the bruised reed, and looks like rough handling of the wounds of a lacerated heart. Sometimes his plainness does seem to degenerate into coarseness, and his fidelity into rudeness. Much, however, depended upon the tone and look with which his

words were uttered. The same expression, which, when delivered in a bland and kindly manner, is quite inoffensive, would be harsh and repulsive when spoken in a scolding and reproachful tone. Let every one, therefore, be cautious, how they imitate him in this. In his hands, this treatment was usually successful. His dealing with some cases was like that wondrous sagacity which leads eminent physicians to perceive that only desperate remedies, dangerous in less skilful hands than theirs, will do. A soft and soothing treatment will sometimes only lull the patient into a fatal lethargy. He must be roused in a manner which to him seems unkind, and perhaps put to pain in order to be cured. There are occasions when a little of this apparent severity may be of service in dealing with inquirers after salvation. But then it must be done from a principle of love, although with a tone of seeming harshness. It would be well, in some cases, to speak with unusual plainness. I have myself often felt justified in telling persons that I thought them totally wrong, and altogether without true godliness and knowledge of the way of salvation. I hope I know enough of the gospel and of human nature, to know that the cords of love are the bands of a man, and that the apostle speaks of his having been gentle among his converts as a nurse cherishes her children; but in dealing with souls we must not use flattering words, and lull to a fatal slumber those whom we ought to rouse to a sense of danger.

Dr. Spencer knew how to introduce the subject of religion, without at once rousing prejudice in those with whom he conversed, and closing the avenues of their souls against instruction and his further attempts for their salvation. Some beautiful instances of his skill in

this way will be seen in the following pages. I have known well-meaning men in the ministry, who were so abrupt, not to say offensive, in speaking to persons about religion, that instead of engaging attention and awakening solicitude, they inspired disgust and contempt. This repulsive manner is not unfrequently mistaken for fidelity, but true faithfulness combines with zeal prudence affection and courtesy. The subject of religion is itself sufficiently distasteful to an unconverted person, and should not be rendered more so by being introduced in a rude, coarse, and offensive manner. There is no topic on which those who are under real concern about their spiritual welfare are, in many cases at least, less disposed to talk than their religious feelings. Violently, then, to break into the temple of the heart, and rudely to rifle its most sacred treasures, is an offence at once against good taste and Christian discretion. It does require the greatest delicacy on the part of those who would do good in the way of individual conversation, not to wound the sensibilities of the timid and sensitive mind. Not that, by these remarks, I am undoing what I have attempted to do in this introduction. I still say that it must be, if we would carry out the design of our mission, one great part of our duty to individualize, as far as we can, our hearers, and to labour, by direct personal intercourse with them, to promote their eternal salvation. There is nothing in this at all analogous to the tyranny over the conscience, the officious meddling with the secrets of the soul, the revolting intrusion into the sanctuary of the heart, practised by the sacerdotal spy in the recess of the confessional. What I ask and contend for is merely that conversation with individuals in our congregations,

which it may be well supposed ought to be maintained between the teacher and the taught, and which will aid our flocks in acquiring that knowledge of the way of salvation on which depend their eternal destinies.

I see no peculiarity in the constitution of society in America which should render Dr. Spencer's method more applicable to that country than to our own. It may be thought, perhaps, by some, that the republican form of government has so far diffused its spirit through the general habits of the people as to place them more upon an equality with each other, and thus to render such personal address more easy. There is but little, if any, weight in this. For there is as much refinement of feeling, as much personal respect, on the other side of the Atlantic as there is on ours. Let it never be thought that there is any thing discourteous, any thing at war with true politeness, on the part of a minister, who shall, in a respectful manner and on a befitting occasion, introduce the subject to any one of his congregation, although without being first addressed by him respecting religion.

My brethren in the ministry will not I hope deem me suspicious of either their fidelity or devotedness, or reproach me as officious and presuming, if in the conclusion of this introduction I exhort them to review afresh the great object of their vocation, and to inquire into their manner of discharging its duties. In an age like the present, when so many secondary objects are coming forward into notice, such as an improved system of ministerial education, and a more elegant and tasteful style of ecclesiastical architecture, and when matters of such absorbing interest in the departments of science

and the arts, politics and commerce, indeed in all the spheres of human activity, are rising up to captivate and possess the public mind, thus drawing off its attention from things unseen and eternal, there needs new and intense devotedness on the part of our pastors; and yet without great and earnest care there is a danger of there being less of it. A trumpet call, infinitely louder than any I can send forth, is necessary to summon us all to our post of labour with renewed self-consecration. Pastoral responsibility cannot be an ordinary thing at any time, much less in such a time as this, and cannot, must not, be taken easily. Our office is either the wildest extravagance, or it demands the most solemn and weighty of human thoughts. What we need then, I repeat, is a fresh unction from heaven; a new baptism of the Spirit; a new impulse from "the powers of the world to come;" a yearning over souls; a wrestling with God, if not with the blood, yet with the tears of Gethsemane, that we may prevail for the salvation of unconverted numbers in this time and this land and this strangely agitated people. I am not an enemy to learning in ministers, except when the learning of Athens and Rome eclipses that of Jerusalem; or to science, if it be not atheistically mad, or sceptically vain, or incorrigibly perverse, and doating in its opposition to the Father of Light; or to philosophy, except it be that which is falsely so called, and is both vain and deceitful. As I have already said, I am no advocate for pious imbecility or reverend incompetency. Even seraphic piety, if combined with ignorance, does not of itself meeten for the pulpit. "What has ignorance to do in the sacred office? Just as much as sin, I had almost

said, and no more. God is not the patron of darkness. He has none in his own nature, and next his altars there should be perpetual light. A minister of Christ is expressed emphatically by the metaphor of a star. And why? Obviously because he is appropriately a luminary to the world." All this is admitted; but by another metaphor he is called "a flame of fire," the heat and energy of which are the points of its resemblance, rather than its light. Yes; the ministry needed for these times is one possessed of a burning energy of soul, and not merely a ministry learned and philosophical; but one which, whatever be its attainments, and the greater the better, will carry learning, philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, and everything else, as so much fuel to increase the intensity and efficiency of that fire which burns in the soul of a man melting with the love of souls, and constrained by the love of Christ.

All my experience as a preacher and a pastor for fifty years, in which I have had special opportunities for extensive observation, deepens in my soul every way the conviction of the cardinal importance of a ministry, richly, ably, and abundantly scriptural in its character. It is on this we may expect the dew of heaven to fall in its richness. This is the channel of the blessing, even life for evermore.

To intense efforts for the conversion of souls, exerted with diligence and in a scriptural manner, in the pulpit and out of it, we must add, if we would succeed, a tender and affectionate disposition. What an example of this we have in the apostle Paul, who to a giant's mind united a woman's heart. "Remember," said he,

in addressing the elders of the Ephesian church, "that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Oh! those tears! they seem to contain a whole body of christian theology, christian morality, and christian experience. Next to those which his great Master shed over Jerusalem, they may affect us most of all the tears ever dropped on our cold hard earth. And both together, the tears of Jesus and of his servant Paul, teach us that one of the qualifications of a good minister of Christ, is a tender, affectionate heart, and that one of the fittest occasions of his tears is the condition of impenitent sinners. Let us for a moment dwell on Paul's words; "For the space of three years:" three years out of thirty to a single church! So much for the time. "I warned," earnestly, solemnly entreated and besought men to be reconciled to God: so much for the manner and matter of his ministry. "Day and night," whether refreshed or fatigued, in season and out of season: so much for opportunity. "I ceased not," without intermission or interruption: so much for perseverance. "Every one," not only the ministers, but the members of the Ephesian church; not only the members collectively, but individually; not only after conversion, but before: so much for persons. "With tears:" so much for affection. "What a multitude of tears must Paul have shed in his time. What a victim to emotion must have been the martyr spirit of this flaming herald of the cross; for it is manly to weep where there is occasion for weeping. The sensibilities of the heart, duly excited, are a fragrant atmosphere investing the soul, and shedding its soft and balmy dews on all its powers. They are the

silver tissues that are woven into the delicate but immortal texture of the mind."*

Let the ministry learn, then, of how much importance are a tender heart and weeping eye, combined with, and controlled by, a vigorous and manly intellect. Our aim must be to make men feel as well as think; and the old Latin writer teaches us that to make others feel we must feel ourselves. And then what an example and recommendation does the conduct of the great apostle at Ephesus place before us, of that attention to anxious and inquiring souls individually, which is before set forth in this volume! He not only "disputed and taught publicly in the school of Tyrannus, but ceased not to warn every one," as another part of his address tells us "from house to house." Dr. Spencer did but imitate Paul, when he followed home his hearers to their own habitations. Let us imitate both. Let us with all tenderness, judgment, and diligence, search out in private the cases that need our attention. Let us remember the rebuke given by God to the shepherds of the ancient church: "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; nor sought that which was lost."

My brethren will forgive me, I hope, if I suggest that there is amongst us all, if we look at the stupendous truths and momentous objects of our ministry, a criminal supineness and a lamentable deficiency of the burning zeal which should characterize our activity. Amidst the hurry of our work in this age of bustling

* Adolphe Monod's "Sermon on the Christianity of Paul's Tears."

energy, we have too little leisure to reflect upon our mission, and inquire into the manner in which we are fulfilling its requirements and terrible responsibilities. A time of seclusion, when sickness of a serious nature dismisses us from the pulpit and the study, shuts us up in the chamber of solitude, and leaves us alone with our conscience, is sometimes granted to us as an opportunity of self-conference, and offers to us a befitting opportunity for a fresh survey of our work, and for a solemn scrutiny into our means of executing it. Ah, then, when the hours pass slowly away, and the time is occupied between solemn recollections of the past, and still more solemn anticipations of the future; when we scan our own actions and weigh our own motives; when it seems probable that all our stewardship is over, except the account to be rendered to the Great Master, and when the audit is looked for as very near, then how differently do we judge of the momentous importance and responsibility of the ministerial office, to what we do while busily engaged in its various functions! How really awful a thing does it then appear to us to watch for souls, and to give account of the manner in which we have performed our duties! Such, as is well known, has been my situation of late. The hand of God arrested me in the midst of my labours, and sent me to my chamber, where, during days of weakness and nights of sleeplessness, I reviewed a ministry not altogether inactive nor unprofitable, and protracted beyond the ordinary length of service; and oh, how clearly and impressively did the great object of the ministry, as designed for the salvation of souls, appear to me then! How worthless, in those somewhat awful moments, did

all other ends, compared with this, appear to my mind! How deeply humbled did I feel under the conviction of the imperfect manner in which this great object had been sought; and how full was my determination, should my life be longer spared, to make this the great and only object of my remaining days! It seemed to me then, as I have expressed it elsewhere, as if we were all loiterers together in the vineyard of the Lord, and as though "a workman that needed not to be ashamed" was rarely to be found, since Whitefield and Wesley had gone to their rest.

I am still in circumstances calculated to give solemnity to my reflections, and perhaps some weight to my words. The pressure of disease upon my bodily frame has been lightened, but it has left me no longer "strong to labour." I am on the verge of old age, and the subject of not a few of its infirmities. The evening of life is come for me, and with it some of its clouds. Should those clouds, however, only furnish a new theatre on which to display the lustre of my setting sun, and afford me an opportunity of glorifying Christ by the passive virtues of the Christian character, they ought to be more welcome than even a clearer sky. It is now some consolation to me to recollect that amidst innumerable defects, which, if affection has concealed them from the notice of my friends, are humblingly known to myself, I have in some measure ever kept in view the conversion of sinners as the great end of the Christian ministry, and therefore of mine. I started in my preaching career, while yet a student, with this before my eyes, as the great purpose for which I entered the pulpit. This I have kept in view through a ministry

of half a century. This I now look at, with undiverted eye, in the latter scenes of my life; and taught both by my own experience, and by observation of all I have seen in the conduct of others, were I now beginning my course instead of gradually closing it, I should most deliberately choose this as my ministerial vocation, and consider that my official life would be almost a lost adventure if this were not in some good measure its blessed result. In the pursuit of this object, notwithstanding all my defects and manifold imperfections, I have had my reward. I speak thus, not in a way of boasting, but of gratitude, and for the encouragement of my brethren in the ministry, especially its younger members. God will never suffer those altogether to fail in their object who make the conversion of souls their great aim, and who employ in earnestness of prayer and action his own methods, and depend upon his own Spirit for accomplishing it.

Ministers may think too little of this now, and too much lose sight of the work of conversion, in their eager desires and ardent ambition after popularity and applause; but the time is coming when these, except as they give a man a wider sphere for his converting work, will be thought worthless and vain. Amidst the gathering infirmities of old age, and the anticipations of eternity, much more at the bar of Christ, and in the celestial world, it will be deemed a poor and meagre reflection to a minister of Christ, that he was once followed and applauded by admiring crowds. The knowledge that he had been the instrument of converting a single sinner from the error of his ways, and saving a soul from death, will then be worth more than

the applauses of a world or the admiration of an age; and is an honour for which the crown of royalty or the wreath of victory might be bartered now with infinite advantage. Then amidst the scenes of the last judgment, and the splendours of immortality, they who have been most eager in seeking, and most successful in obtaining, the richest distinctions upon earth, shall confess that "he who winneth souls is wise," and shall see "that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars for ever and ever."

THE CONVERSION OF SOULS THE GREAT END OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY:

READ AT A CONFERENCE OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS, HELD AT CHESTER IN MARCH, 1853, TO CONSIDER THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION IN THE COUNTRY.

THE CONVERSION OF SOULS THE GREAT END OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

My beloved brethren, permit me, before I come to the subject of the paper which I have been requested to prepare, to express the pleasure I feel in meeting you on this occasion, and my deep conviction of the vast importance of such ministerial conferences as that which we now hold. They furnish admirable opportunities for the communication of mutual instruction, sympathy, encouragement, and stimulus in reference to the great work in which we are engaged, and furnish to us all new plans and modes of action, new means of usefulness, and new incentives to diligence, by bringing together the results of our separate and individual experience. May the Holy Spirit at this time so baptize us with fire, that we may go to our respective spheres of duty not only refreshed, but in every way benefited by our coming together!

The momentous subject on which I have been requested to deliver a few thoughts is thus announced in the circular: "Our success as ministers in the awakening of souls to their guilt and danger; the progress of the work of conversion in our congregations generally; and the necessity of increased zeal and prayer, in unfolding the Gospel, to arouse the careless and worldly;" by which I understand that I am to give

you my views of the ordinary and average results of our ministry in this day, as regards its great object, the conversion of souls; and of the means which are necessary more effectually and extensively to accomplish it.

I take up the word "conversion" in the orthodox sense of it, as held not only by our great ancestors the Reformers, and the Puritan and Nonconformist divines, but by all denominations of evangelical Christians of the present day. By "conversion," they mean the regeneration of the soul by the Holy Spirit, and its actual turning from sin to God through faith in Christ; in other words, an entire subjective change of the spiritual condition of the soul, through the grace of God upon objective truth. Deem me not unnecessarily precise in this explanation. I have serious and painful apprehensions that this subject, or at any rate this view and mode of stating it, is with some becoming obsolete; and that conversion, as we have been accustomed to consider and represent it, is among the old divinity which must give place to a more philosophical mode of treating religion and the soul of man. The corruption of human nature, and the necessity of a divine and entire change of all the springs of human feeling and action; the guilt and condemnation of the sinner, and the infinite importance of rousing and awakening him to a sense of his danger, and urging him to flee from "the wrath to come;" are subjects, I fear, retiring from some modern pulpits, reputed evangelical, to give place to matters more adapted, as is supposed, to an enlightened age and the progress of philosophy. In this paper, then, I hold by the old orthodox meaning of the word "conversion;" and the question I am to answer is, How far, as preachers, we are successful in

effecting this great moral change in the souls of our hearers? No wonder such a question should be asked. We must be dead, or at any rate indifferent, to the chief object of our ministry, if we do not solemnly, anxiously, and frequently, in the closet, when alone with God and our conscience, ask the question, "Am I, are my brethren generally, successful in this work?" The conversion of souls is the great end of our ministry. If we effect not this, we are the men to whom belongs the sorrowful inquiry, the doleful lament, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Verily I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." No matter that we have drawn together a large congregation, that they are satisfied with our ministry, praise our sermons, and lavish affection upon our persons; that the peace and prosperity of our churches in external things are preserved, or even that the number of church members is increased (I believe it is increased, in very many cases, by unsuitable persons): it is all nothing for God's glory, nothing for the salvation of souls, nothing for our own ultimate reward, unless the real work of conversion goes forward. Without this, whatever else we do, our work will be burned, and we, though saved as by fire, shall suffer loss. It is what we do, and only what we do, in first converting the soul and then carrying it forward to salvation, that has the principle of immortality in it, that will be among the works that follow us to heaven, and be our crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. This, of course, applies to the ministry in general; to the great bulk of our preachers. I do not for a moment question that there are some who, by works on theology, and even on

cognate subjects, may perform essential services to the cause of Christ. Although they may never have been blessed in a single instance in the way of direct conversion, they have usefully furnished the means and the instruments whereby others have accomplished this work; they have forged the weapons with which their co-workers have carried on the spiritual warfare, and will share the honour of the victory obtained over the hosts of darkness, in some measure by their aid. But with exceptions of this kind, and one or two others that might be made, I affirm that the work of direct conversion is the great end of the Christian ministry; and that where this is not effected, a ministerial life, however long continued, or with whatever other results it may be attended, is a melancholy failure, a lost adventure.

How then is this work now going on, among us who are here present, in our denomination generally, and in the Christian Church at large? This is a question, I know, somewhat vague in its nature and somewhat difficult to answer. That much is being done to this blessed effect it is impossible to doubt. God has declared that his word shall not return to him void of effect. When we remember that Christ has said that his words are life and spirit, and when we consider the multitudes every Sabbath listening to the joyful sound, we may be sure that many are pressing into the kingdom of God. General principles and existing facts should lead us to conclude that a great and a glorious work of conversion is ever going on, and that more souls were never being converted than now. I appeal to you, dear brethren, whether it is not so. Are we left altogether without a witness that God is with us? Do

not our Church meetings delightfully prove to us that the Lord God is indeed among us, if not in the full manifestation, yet in the hiding of his power? And we must be careful not to overlook this. Still there are some things to be set off against it. Ours is an age of religious zeal and activity; action is pleasant, it gratifies our love of employment and our social propensities; and there may be much zeal with little real piety; and hence it is to be feared that all this zealous working of our people may deceive us, and lead us to conclude that it is better with us in regard to conversion than it really is. And of those who are added to our Churches, how many ascribe their conversion not to our ministry, but to some other means, with which our preaching has but a remote and an indirect connection? Nor must I omit another and a most painful deduction from the number of supposed converts by our ministry, I mean those who are brought by us into the fellowship of the Church, but whose subsequent conduct too plainly proves, they cry "Lord, Lord," but do not the will of our Father in heaven. It is a day of easy profession. Church membership imposes no cross, and calls for no sacrifice. To a considerable extent the reproach of Christ has ceased, and religion confers reputation; hence it is to be expected that many will take up the profession, who soon evince that whatever credibility attached to it at the time they made it, it was profession only. How are our hearts wrung with bitterness and anguish at having so often to say to those of whom we once hoped better things, "Ye did run well, what did hinder you?" I am more particular, I believe, than very many of my brethren in the reception of members; I keep back many whom they would receive; and can honestly say,

that it is the greatest perplexity of my pastorate to decide upon the propriety of receiving to fellowship those who present themselves as candidates: and yet, with all this care, how many are there who, though they do not fall into open sin and subject themselves to expulsion, lead me by their lukewarmness and worldliness to feel they were never converted to God?

What then is my conclusion, what is my opinion of the progress of the work of conversion in this day? Why, that it is going on at a rate which should excite our serious apprehension, and that it is high time to institute inquiries as to what hinders it, and what will promote it. I have said in the last page, that probably there were never so many souls converted to God as in the present day. But let us consider the amazing increase of the means. Viewed relatively to these, there were perhaps never fewer.

These views, I am aware, will by some be set down to the medium through which a gloomy imagination looks out upon the external world. No, brethren, no. They are not the mere misapprehensions of a mind propense to fear. Judge for yourselves. Listen to the testimony which comes to you from all quarters. Consult your own experience. While you look cheerfully at every branch in which the blossoms of hope are putting forth the promise of fruit, look also at those branches where no buds appear, and where all is desolate sterility.

In judging of this matter, bear in recollection the vast abundance, variety, and adaptation of the means for conversion which this age affords, not only in the increased number of evangelical preachers both within and without the pale of the Church of England, but

also those supplemental aids to our ministry furnished by Sunday Schools, Town Missions, Tract Societies, and other agencies, means so abundant as almost to render the population carelessly familiar with their nature, and awfully insensible to their importance. And bear in recollection also what I have already alluded to and am extremely anxious to keep before your mind, and that is, not, how many may be brought into our places of worship by the attractions of genius and eloquence, startling paradoxes or speculative novelties: not, how many may be collected round the pulpit of some favourite preacher, and by admiration of his talents and praises of his sermons obtain for themselves an easy and speedy access to the church; but, how many are truly regenerated by the Spirit of God, and give evidence of a new and holy life, and of peace with God through justification by faith.

True it is, and not to be forgotten, we are not to expect the same amount of conversions by our preaching as was obtained in apostolic days at the Pentecostal season, nor are we now to look for the same mighty power which accompanied the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley. The glad tidings which floated from their lips over the congregated masses that were drawn together by them, had not only the abiding attraction of the doctrine of the cross, but all the aid which the most wondrous oratory and the most impressive novelty, novelty both of matter and manner, could give them. The pulpit was then almost the only means of public instruction; the press and Sunday School education had not familiarized the audience with the topics of the preacher, and led them to anticipate almost everything he could say. They had not to preach gospel sermons

to a gospel-hardened multitude. What they had to deliver was news as well as good news. How different is our case, who have to preach to people who from childhood have heard presented to them, in every form and by every means, the truths we have to impart, and who have heard them also for years, perhaps for an age, from our own lips! It is sometimes a question which we propose to ourselves in a spirit almost of hopeless despondency, "What can I say to them which I have not said a thousand times already? They are so familiar with the thunders of the law and the softer tones of the gospel, that they have become insensible to them. How can I hope to do them any good? By what new modes of presenting the great and eternal verities of the gospel shall I seek to win their souls to Christ?"

Ah, my beloved brethren, I will confess my own weakness, unbelief, and sinfulness, in too often going to my pulpit with paralyzing fears of this kind; I have been almost ready to say, "I will speak no more in thy name," and have felt a secret wish I could carry the gospel message to those on whose ears the glad tidings would fall with the charm and the power of novelty. And be it known to you, my younger brethren, that these thoughts and feelings are more apt to find a place in the minds of old ministers than in those of young ones. Sometimes I am led to think that they, however useful in the instruction, edification, and consolation of believers, can scarcely expect to be extensively useful in the conversion of sinners; and some will suggest that facts support the idea; yet recent experience has served to convince me that this is an error, and that if aged ministers are less useful than they

formerly were, it is because they have remitted under the chilling influence of their approaching winter, some of that ardour which they cherished and evinced in the vernal periods of their history. I now believe, that if age do not benumb our energies, and do not take us off, which it is apt to do, from the work of conversion to the gentler duties of comforting the believer, we should find the former go on with as much vigour as ever. I am now trying the experiment of seeing what late sowings will do, and whether one who is approaching his jubilee may not hope to be as useful in the way of conversion as in the years when juvenescence was upon him. Humbly and sorrowfully conscious, in looking back upon years that are gone, of much neglect, and aware that very many years of labour cannot remain for me in the vineyard, I am redoubling my labours in the evening of my day, and working hard, by the light of my setting sun, in this line of ministerial duty. I am directing my preaching and attention more than ordinarily to this object, and I am thankful to say, not without some measure of success. I find that there is such a thing as bearing fruit of this kind unto old age.

But to return from this digression to the enquiry I was pursuing, that is, not whether the work of conversion is going on with the same rapidity and to the same extent as in the more remarkable eras of Church history, but whether, even in this age, when so many other means share the work with the pulpit, there be that amount of good done by us ministers in this way which might be reasonably expected; and if not, why not? Whether, in fact, a much greater effect would not follow our ministry, if proper and adequate means were taken

to obtain it, whether we have not ourselves to blame for the little success of which we sometimes complain, and over which we mourn; and whether we should not instantly and earnestly set ourselves with fresh diligence and devotedness to this great work.

Let us then, dear brethren, on this occasion, solemnly, as in the presence of God and in prospect of the judgment day; honestly, as really wishing to know the actual state of the case; earnestly, as considering it to be a matter of infinite moment to ourselves and our flocks; humbly, as being deeply conscious of having been wanting to our great Master and immortal souls, inquire what more we can do to carry out the ends of our ministry, which are, in fact, identical with the designs of the cross of Christ. Let us come to this question with all the intense solicitude which its importance demands. Oh, that there may be an agonizing desire to know better how to win souls to Christ! Oh, that we may be all willing to sit at the feet of each other, and the oldest to learn even from the youngest how to snatch the firebrands from the flames! May God help us to-day to look at our work afresh, in all its measureless magnitude, infinite importance, awful responsibility, and eternal results both to others and ourselves.

In investigating the causes of our want of success, I leave out of consideration the innate depravity of human nature, applicable to all ages alike; and also the sovereignty of God's grace. No doubt there is something to be set down to these things. That God is pleased on some occasions to give unsought blessings is very true, that he causes the showers of his blessing to come down more copiously at some times and on some

labours than on others, must be admitted; but it is not his usual course, which is, to give his Spirit to them that ask, and seek, and knock: and that at any time and all times he is willing to grant his Holy Spirit in much larger abundance than we ordinarily receive it, is unquestionable. Sovereignty is not intended either to lessen human responsibility, or to discourage believing prayer or confident expectation.

My beloved brethren, survey the features of the age in which we are now carrying on this great work of conversion. Never had ministers more to contend against than we now have; never were more antagonistic influences at work to counteract endeavours to save souls. It is not one thing, but it is every thing which we have to struggle against. The minds, hearts, and hands of men are full of worldly business, schemes, and enterprises. Science is so multiplying its discoveries, art its inventions, trade its competitions; emigration and colonization, with the raging gold fever, are so absorbing; knowledge with its books and lectures on all subjects is so engrossing; the taste for pleasure, with its innumerable appliances of gratification, is so widely spread and so rapidly increasing; home refinements and the advance of elegant and luxurious living are so multiplying the embellishments and attractions of life: and things seen and temporal are so completely throwing into the shade things unseen and eternal; that I sometimes find myself sinking into an unworthy scepticism as to the possibility of getting men's attention at all to the concerns of the soul, and am ready to say, "It is hopeless to attempt to stem this torrent of worldliness." And then, how many subjects and practices are perpetually coming up within the circle of religion itself,

which, though some of them are necessary and important, and others lawful, are still, if they are not watched, likely to lead off the minds both of preachers and hearers from this one great work of conversion! Popular education, Papal aggression, with the controversy which it had brought with it; tea meetings, so numerous, and not always so seriously conducted as they should be; public meetings of all kinds; these matters, and others which might be mentioned, all good in themselves, too often give occasion to many persons to content themselves with a share in religious business instead of seeking after religion in its reality; and have a tendency, without great care, to produce a species of religious dissipation, and to throw an obstacle in the way of conversion. The more we multiply subjects and occasions for that religious activity which may be carried on by unconverted persons, the more we increase the danger of their being satisfied with this without being savingly converted to God.

And then, what attention is being paid to the externals of religion! How are the minds of our ministers and congregations taken up with the subject of organs, psalmody, academic degrees, pulpit costume, architecture, political power; all, I repeat, lawful, and some of them, when properly managed, helpful to religion, and injurious only when they divert the mind from the more momentous subject of conversion, which, I am afraid, they are now doing. As it is by excessive attention to lawful things that the souls of men are ruined, so it is by excessive attention to secondary good things that greater and primary ones are overlooked, and the progress of conversion arrested. It is amidst the solicitude for these lesser matters that we are in danger

of losing sight of greater ones. I will concede to their advocates all the importance that they can reasonably claim for them; but amidst all this discussion about them I will still cry, "Conversion, the conversion of souls, this, this is what we want, and men that will carry it on."

Let us, then, seek God's grace to rise to the exigencies of the times we live in, the difficulties we have to contend with, and the work we have to do. Instead of finding in these circumstances an apology for remissness, let us rather feel them to be incentives to renewed diligence; instead of throwing down the labouring oar in heartless despondency, because the stream runs so strongly against us, let us grasp it with a firmer hand, and put forth more energy, and ply it with greater vigour. Let us look round upon the features of the times, and say, "What manner of men ought we to be, to carry on in such a busy age the great work of converting men's souls to God! If we are carried away by the stream of worldliness, what is to become of our hearers? Shall we let them go on, because so swallowed up by things seen and temporal, or shall we break in upon their exclusive devotedness to the world with a louder voice and with a more cogent earnestness?" Let us look at Whitfield, raising his humble pulpit and lifting his voice amidst the uproar of a London fair, invading the territories, attacking the very citadel of Satan, and converting souls by hundreds in the very suburbs of Pandemonium. Who need fear, after this?

But what is wanting on our part for carrying on the work of conversion with greater vigour? First of all, a deeper seriousness, a more eminent sanctity, a loftier devotion, in ourselves; in short, a more perfect develop-

ment of the work of conversion in our own character, conduct, and spirit. We need more of the image of God, the mind of Christ, the spirit of the apostles, reformers, and martyrs, the temper of heaven, the impress of eternity. There is a power in eminent holiness which adds weight to our sermons. The devil stood abashed before the seraph, and felt "how awful goodness is." We do not speak for God as those who live in his presence, nor of Christ as those who dwell by his cross, nor of eternity as those who sojourn on the border of heaven. There should be a something almost unearthly about us, to contend with the earthly around us. But we are too much of the earth, earthly. I want no affected grimace, none of the mere official formalities of godliness, no mere professional odour of sanctity, no monkish austerity, nor the sinking of the man, nor even of the citizen, in the Christian. But we ought to be consistent, and should be specimens, and good ones too, of the religion we teach. This should be our motto, "I believe, and therefore speak." Nothing humbles me so much as my defects as a Christian. I am more ashamed of my shortcomings in the closet than I am of those in the study or the pulpit; and it is the deficiencies in the former that lead to those in the latter. Oh, what men we should be, and might be, in the sanctuary, if we were always to come forth from the secret place of the Most High, and from under the shadow of the Almighty!

Dear brethren, I could almost pause here, lay aside my paper, and call upon you to fall down with me in deep humiliation before God on account of our shortcomings. Oh, what swelling thoughts would cause our bosoms to heave, what burning words would drop from our tongues, what awful majesty and smiling love would

be enthroned on our brow, if we were to speak of eternal salvation as those who felt more of its power! We need to be men of prayer; this, this is low among us. Business starves devotion, action prevents meditation, and publicity prevents retirement. In keeping other men's vineyards, or professing to do so, we neglect our own; and by neglecting our own we are unfit to keep those of other men. As Christians we are little men, and therefore as preachers we are feeble ones. What ought to be our piety, who have to support that of other people! Does it not depend upon us, upon our prayers, our spirit, our piety (O unutterably solemn thought!) what those of our people will be? Shall we, shall we then, this day consecrate ourselves afresh to God?

What is wanted is a better world: how full is it of ignorance, of sin, of misery! How is God dishonoured, the human character degraded, and ruin inflicted upon immortal souls! Let us weep for the world. We need a better Church to make a better world, a Church filled with the spirit and all the fulness of God. And we need a better ministry to make a better Church; a ministry more holy, more heavenly, more spiritual as Christians, that they may be more powerful as preachers. A better ministry would make a better Church; and a better Church would make a better world. Yes, yes; let us hear it, and tremble, and weep, and pray, and improve. The world's conversion, the glories of the millennium, the universal reign of Christ, are accelerated or hindered chiefly by us ministers. There was an incomparable tract published some years ago, entitled, "A Revived Ministry the only hope of a Revived Church." Its tenderness was equal to its pungency, and its humility to its boldness. Some complained of its

title, and others disliked its uncompromising fidelity; and we showed how little we wanted to be revived, by suffering its circulation to languish instead of pushing it in every direction. We suffered the voice of meek reproof and affectionate exhortation to fall on heedless ears, and we were not revived because we did not wish to be. But it is a solemn truth, which we ought to ponder; and I repeat it again, "a Revived Ministry is the only hope of a Revived Church," even as a revived Church is the only hope of the dead world.

That the work of conversion may be carried on with more vigour, it is necessary that it should be acknowledged and sought as the great end of the Christian ministry. It must stand out before us in all its magnitude, grandeur, and luminousness, as the pyramids do to the traveller in every step of his journey across the desert of Cairo. There must be neither mistake, doubt, hesitation, nor tergiversation here. It must be deeply infixed in our mind, interwoven there, and inseparable from all our convictions, that this is the end of our preaching; and as such it must be sought. Baxter, a high authority in such matters, in his most valuable and searching work, "The Reformed Pastor," gives the weight of his name to this sentiment, that the conversion of sinners, even more than the edification of believers, should hang with greatest weight upon the mind of every minister. Brethren, have we all read, and often read, that work of this great Nonconformist? May I propose, as the most likely way of carrying into effect the object of this meeting, that we all agree to read it over again within the next month? Shall we sharpen the sword of our spirit on that whetstone? I am sure I could not mention a practice more likely to

carry out the object of this day than to recommend this simple act. Hear his language on this subject:

"I confess I am forced frequently to neglect that which should tend to the further increase of knowledge in the godly, and may be called 'stronger meat,' because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Who is able to talk of controversies, or of nice unnecessary points, yea, or truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent soever, while he seeth a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his face, who must be changed or damned? Methinks I even see them entering upon their final woe! Methinks I even hear them crying out for help, and present help. Their misery speaks the louder, because they have not hearts to seek or ask help for themselves. Many a time have I known that I had some hearers of higher fancies, that looked for rarities, and were addicted to despise the minister if he told them not somewhat more than ordinary; and yet I could not find it in my heart to turn from the observation of the necessities of the impenitent for the humouring of these, nor to leave speaking to the apparently miserable for their salvation, to speak to such novelists; no, nor so much as should otherwise be done, to the weak for their confirmation and increase of grace. Methinks, as Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the Athenians so addicted to idolatry, so it should cast us into one of his paroxysms to see so many men in great probability of being everlastingly undone; and if by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it should more effectually untie our tongues than they tell us that Crœsus's danger did his son's. He that will let a sinner go to hell for want of speaking to him, doth set less by souls than did the Redeemer of souls, and less by his neighbour than rational charity will allow him to do by his greatest enemy. O therefore, brethren, whomsoever you reject, neglect not the most miserable! Whomsoever you pass over, forget not poor souls that are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change do not prevent it. O call after the impenitent, and ply this great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone!"

Oh, these piercing, heart-affecting appeals! Where is the Lord God of Elijah? "Come, O come, Lord God of Baxter, and breathe into us this spirit of compassion for immortal souls!"

I shall now speak of the direct means by which, as it appears to me, this object should be sought. Preaching, of course, sustains the first and highest place among them. A question is sometimes asked, What topics are most likely to be useful in the conversion of sinners; whether such as partake of what is awful and alarming, or such as are characterized by the tenderness and pathos of the gospel? As a general remark I would say, All truth may be made subservient to this end; and provided a man's heart be set upon the object of producing conviction of sin and converting the souls of his hearers, then he will be successful by means of almost any subjects. All truth is homogeneous, and one truth leads to another. There are some preachers who would dwell upon the most awful and alarming passages of Holy Scripture on the one hand, or the most pathetic themes of the gospel on the other, in a manner so dry, so coldly logical, so heartlessly metaphysical, philosophical, or critical, that it is not to be wondered at that they never convert souls. They are mere pulpit essayists, or critics, or expositors, or philosophers; but far, very far, from being watchmen for souls. There is much of this preaching, I fear, in the present day; much philosophical, metaphysical, logical, sentimental discussion and description; but I regret to say, that the close, fervent, direct, startling, rousing style of pulpit address, such as we find in Baxter, in Davies of New Jersey, in Jonathan Edwards, in Whitfield and Wesley, in Bradley, in James Parsons, in the great body of the Methodists in our own country, and the various denominations in America, is going out for a more smooth, soft, and dulcet strain of address. Mellifluous flutelike notes have supplanted the shrill

blast of the trumpet; and sinners instead of being roused from their ruinous slumbers, are lulled into a deeper sleep. Hearken to much of the preaching of the modern pulpit, and you need not wonder that souls are not converted: the wonder would be if they were! Ah, how many preachers seem not to know for what purpose they are called (are they really called?) to minister! If we would have the work of conversion go forward, we must not pander to the appetite for what is new, and neglect the good old truths of the gospel; nor must we meet the demand for "adaptation" by substituting philosophy for Christianity; nor gratify the imagination or the intellect while the conscience is left to slumber on; nor, for the sake of a few worldly-minded young men or women who may be in our congregations, give up both the law and the gospel for vague generalities, speculative novelties, or intellectual disquisitions. We must preach the doctrine of the cross in all its fulness, with all the unction and intellectual power we can command; and "knowing the terrors of the Lord, we must persuade men." As ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us, we must pray men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. This was how Paul fulfilled his ministry, and how we must fulfil ours. In the great business of awakening reflection and producing conviction, I have found through my whole ministry, solemn, impressive, and somewhat alarming subjects to be very useful. Dr. Dwight bears the same testimony; so does the experience of Jonathan Edwards, and perhaps that of most others. Still we should never forget the admirable cautions of Mr Hall on this subject:

"In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an

air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the Word of God is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight upon our hearers, it is when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and then may we expect them to realize its solemn import, when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. 'Of whom I have told you before,' said St. Paul, 'and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.' What force does that affecting declaration derive from these tears!"

Ah, my brethren, it has been too much forgotten that a minister does much in the way of converting sinners by his heart as well as by his head. It is when his own soul is melted down into tenderness and compassion, he is likely to melt and move the souls of others.

It is with the deepest anxiety and apprehension that I observe the increasing practice among our young ministers of reading their sermons; than which it is impossible to conceive of any thing more likely to cramp and paralyze their energies, and to hinder them in the great work of saving souls. I am aware that in some rare cases the art of reading is so perfect, and indeed the act of reading is so little noticeable by their hearers, in consequence of the free and graceful manner in which it is done, that the effect on the audience is almost as great as extempore speaking. But these are exceptions, and not the rule. In most cases where reading is adopted, it is in the stiff, formal, and unimpressive manner. The tones are monotonous, graceful action is repressed, the force derived from the animated countenance and speaking eye is lost, and much of the

power in the orator to create sympathy in the soul of the hearer by the fervour of his manner is forfeited. The fire of his enthusiasm is damped, or burns dimly and smoulderingly, like a flame from beneath a heap of earth. He cannot let loose his holy, benevolent, and impassioned feelings upon his audience. He is restrained, and cannot plead, wrestle, and agonize as a man should do who is beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God: and he feels this to such an extent that he usually does not attempt it, and confines himself in the selection of subjects, to such as are more suited to theological discussion and intellectual investigation, which require no impassioned manner to give them force. I will here make another concession on the subject of reading; and that is, on particular occasions and subjects, when profound investigation and elaborate discussion are required, it may be very proper for us, whether at home or abroad, to use our notes even to the very letter. Such investigation and discussion, however, should not be the staple of pulpit exercises, and reading should not be their usual method. Let this practice become common among us, and the power of our ministry is gone, and the prosperity of our Churches is impaired.

In seeking the conversion of men to God, we are not, however, to suppose that our work begins and ends with the pulpit. That it does begin there is very true; but it must not end there. Impressions, however deep, produced by sermons, are usually very evanescent, unless some means be adopted and pains taken to give them fixedness and permanence; hence it is of immense importance to employ some method of finding out and bringing under our fostering care those whom our preaching has led into a state of spiritual anxiety. It

is utterly inconceivable that such awful and melting truths, as in our more earnest seasons and manner we preach, should not produce impression and awaken solicitude in many minds. Multitudes go away every Sabbath from the preaching of the gospel thoughtful and serious, whose impressions die away and whose convictions are extinguished for want of some one to nourish them, and to lead on the subjects of them in the path of life. I remember in my youthful days, when first under religious concern, standing at the corner of a street, and with an almost bursting heart watching the minister home, when I should, from the bottom of my burdened spirit, have thanked the individual who would have introduced me to him, or have thanked him with unutterable gratitude for an invitation to come and receive the instruction and consolation I so much needed. Beloved brethren, we lose our reward by not seeking out the inquirers after salvation. They are the most interesting important and hopeful class of our hearers. And how are they to be got at? I will here relate, if you will pardon the egotism, my own method. I hold a weekly meeting for inquirers, which commences at eight o'clock. After any sermon of unusually solemn and deep impression, I give out from the pulpit some such notice as this: "Now any of you who are impressed by this discourse, or who are become anxious about your salvation by any other means, and wish to be instructed familiarly in the way of eternal life, are earnestly invited to come to the vestry on such an evening, not to be questioned and examined, but to be addressed." This has been my wont for many years, and always with success, more or less. I have lately carried on this plan for a longer

period than before. Usually I do not continue it for more than about six weeks, and then say to the class, "Now I wish to converse with you individually, and shall be at the vestry for that purpose at such a time." My present number in attendance is about sixty, with whom I have followed the plan of giving them a tract on the subject of my address, which I first comment a little upon, and then give it to them with a very earnest exhortation to peruse it. The advantage of this plan of meeting inquirers at stated times is, that it draws into the class all who are brought under spiritual solicitude by our tract distributors, town missionaries, and Sunday School teachers. Heads of families sometimes send their children and servants.

And this leads me to remark, that as a means of conversion a minister should look well to his Sunday School. We are most of us, I think, verily guilty here. I confess my own sin in former times, in not taking a deeper interest in the spiritual welfare of the crowd of little immortals collected every Sabbath upon our premises. Here is a field which we might cultivate with great success; especially the elder boys and girls, now so generally, in every well conducted school, gathered under able superintendents into Bible classes. It may be said, that this is their work. Yes, brethren; but it is ours also. They train them for us, and then pass them on to us. These classes form our preparatory school, and the teachers are our ushers, who send up the pupils into our higher form. Let us throw our soul into the Sunday School, and consider it a part of our spiritual husbandry: it may be the foreign and outlying part, but still it is a part, of the Lord's field committed to our care and cultivation. And here I would most empha-

tically protest against the too common practice of considering the Sunday School as a thing foreign and separate from the jurisdiction of the pastor, and as wholly under the independent organization management and control of the teachers.

Nor should we consider the religious state of the families that compose our congregations as beyond our notice, or unconnected with our endeavours to convert souls. One great aim of our ministry should be to instruct Christian parents in their duty, and to keep them up to the performance of it. It has long appeared to me that family instruction and religion were never at a lower ebb among us than at the present moment. Catechizing, both by parents and ministers, is a work of other days. The prophet of the family has vanished, if not the priest; and fathers, if not mothers also, have handed over the souls of the children to the minister, and teach through him by proxy, and then of course expect that their children, if converted at all, will be converted by him. But what ground is there for such an expectation? How can it be looked for, that, with such a dead weight operating against us as is to be found in such professing Christian families, we can be successful in winning to Christ the souls of the children? It is a most mischievous mistake, which we ought to do our utmost to correct, to suppose that the pulpit is intended to be the chief means for conversion of the children of professors. Their conversion should be looked for at home, and effected by the parent, rather than in the sanctuary, by the minister; and I do not think we could take a more effectual, though perhaps an indirect, course to promote the conversion of souls, than by a vigorous effort to call the attention of parents, and especially

of mothers, to their duty in this respect. Let us do our very uttermost to revive family instruction and promote domestic conversion.

Whatever organizations are at work in connection with our congregations, whether Religious Tract Societies, town missions, village itineraries, we should have something to do with them all, and also keep up a pervading operating sentiment through all the Church, that it is itself a converting as well as a self-edifying body. Pastor, deacons, and members should all be instinct with life in this particular respect. The Church should not only possess the idea, but be possessed by it, that it is its solemn duty to promote its own increase, and to seek to grow in this way; that its own peace, external prosperity, and maintenance, however desirable and important, are not enough to answer its design, and should not be enough to satisfy its desires. Its aim, its labours, its prayers, should be for the conversion of souls; for a continual aggression on the territories of sin and death and hell, and it should feel that it is no longer fulfilling its mission than when it is carrying on this great work.

And where is it to get this idea, but from the pulpit? It cannot be expected that in this respect the Church will be before the pastor. The pulpit must be the central fire of this holy zeal. It the pastor be lukewarm in the great work of conversion, if he appear to deem it enough to go on with routine and formality, satisfied with preaching it may be two well-composed sermons on the Sabbath, receiving the approving smiles of his flock, and keeping all quiet and peaceable, no wonder the Church partakes of his indifference to this momentous concern.

But besides the usual services in the more immediate spheres of our labour, the congregations committed to our care, ought we not to endeavour to make inroads upon the dark and corrupt mass of the population around us? If there be any correctness in our views of the nature and necessity of conversion, in what an appalling condition are the multitudes at our very doors! The great stream of the population is dashing in one mighty cataract over the precipice of impenitence and unbelief into the awful gulf of perdition below. Oh, are our principles true? Is it true, that without repentance, faith, and holiness, men must perish everlastingly? Then what wreck and ruin of immortal souls is ever going on around us! Sometimes I recoil from my convictions. I feel my benevolence driving me on the rocks of scepticism. I at times almost doubt whether I do believe that souls must perish everlastingly if not converted, or surely, surely I should do more to pluck these brands from the eternal and unquenchable flames. I here express my admiration and approbation of the bold measure of our dauntless brother, Mr. Knill, who for several months has been preaching the gospel in the theatre of this city, on Sunday afternoons, to immense congregations and with glorious success.

In such a world, in such a state, and with such an office as ours, it sometimes appears almost cruel insensibility to do anything else than to carry on direct efforts for the conversion of sinners. I take my share of public lecturing on subjects not directly connected with, though by no means, of course, opposed to, religion; and my judgment and conscience approve the act: and yet I sometimes feel my solicitude for the great objects of my ministry prompting the question,

"Might not this time have been better spent in seeking the conversion of souls?" I know this question is not judicious. I am aware it is too narrow a range on which to view things. I am ready to concede that the ministers of religion should not appear hostile to science, or even indifferent to it, as if they thought science was hostile to religion; that they should not leave infidels unresisted, to scatter the tares of infidelity with the wheat of science; and that they may increase their usefulness by lecturing, if it be kept within due bounds, since it may give weight to their teachings as preachers of the gospel; but I will not conceal my apprehensions and convictions that we are in danger in the present day of allowing the lecture to encroach upon the sermon, science to supersede religion, and the labour to inform men's understanding and to gratify their taste, to take up the time and enervate the vigour which should be devoted to the conversion of their souls. Let me here recall to you the words of Doddridge, in his most solemn discourse on "The evil and danger of neglecting souls."

"Oh, my brethren, let us consider how fast we are, as it were, posting through this dying life, which God has assigned us, in which we are to manage affairs of infinite moment; how fast we are passing on to the immediate presence of our Lord, to give up our account to him! You may judge for yourselves; but permit me to say, that for my own part I would not for ten thousand worlds be that man, who, when God shall ask him at last how he has employed most of his time while he continued a minister in his Church and had the care of souls, should be obliged to reply, 'Lord, I have restored many corrupted passages in the ancient classics, and illustrated many which were before obscure; I have cleared up many intricacies in chronology or geography; I have solved many perplexed cases in algebra; I have refined on astronomical calculations, and left behind me many sheets on these curious and difficult subjects; and these are the employments in which my life has been worn out, when

preparations for the pulpit or ministrations in it did not demand my immediate attendance.' Oh, sirs, as for the waters which are drawn from these springs, how sweetly soever they may taste to a curious mind that thirsts for them, or to an ambitious mind that thirsts for the applause they sometimes procure, I fear there is often reason to pour them out before the Lord with rivers of penitential tears, as the blood of souls which have been forgotten, while these trifles have been remembered and pursued."

And were Doddridge now alive, I am of opinion he would say much the same things of that excessive passion for lecturing which some of our brethren are in danger of contracting, to the neglect of the infinitely greater work of winning souls to Christ.

And while thus referring to that incomparable sermon, I will give one more quotation from it, which, coming from the pen of a scholar, a critic, and a man of general knowledge, will not be supposed to be the crude effusion of suspicious or envious ignorance:

"Nor am I without my fears that a great deal of studious time is lost in an overartful composition of sermons, and in giving them such polish and ornament as does not conduce to their usefulness nor any way balance the labour employed in the work. If we do not diligently watch over our hearts, this will be an incense offered to our own vanity, which will render our sacrifice less acceptable to God, however we and our hearers may be delighted with the perfume. Greater plainness and simplicity of speech might often be more useful to the bulk of our auditory, and perhaps more acceptable too, and on the whole it might be at least equally beautiful; for all that are not children in understanding know that there is a natural and manly kind of eloquence, arising from a deep sense of the subject and an ardent love of the souls of our hearers, which is of all others the most to be desired and esteemed: and although such discourses may be attended with some little inaccuracies, and may want something of the varnish which exacter preparation might put on, yet surely, where a habit of speaking is formed by proper application, and the materials of a sermon are well digested in the mind, it will rise above a reasonable contempt. And if, where exacter preparation is made, a care to preserve the niceties of composition deaden the manner of

delivery and take off either its solemnity, its vigour, or its tenderness, I cannot but apprehend it is as injurious to the character of the orator as it is to that of the Christian. The most celebrated speakers in judicial courts and in senates have in all nations and ages pursued the method I now recommend, and the most acceptable preachers have successfully attempted it. On the whole, permit me to say, it would be a fatal thing to barter away the souls of the people for the highest and justest reputation of speaking well; yet I fear there are many who in this view do it 'for nought, and have not in any sense increased their wealth by the price.'"

Illustrious and immortal Doddridge! oh that we could find and wear thy mantle! And as the most likely way to do it, dear brethren, shall I propose that in addition to Baxter's "Reformed Pastor," we all read again this heart searching, soul stirring sermon?

And now to bring this already too long paper to a close. In asking what more can be done to stimulate the work of conversion in our congregations and by our ministry, let us here before God and each other pledge ourselves more devotedly to this great work. Let us look at it in all its greatness, grandeur, and eternal results. "He that converteth a soul from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." What mind, but that which grasps infinity, immensity, and eternity, can comprehend the import of that wondrous passage? There is a time coming when to have achieved one such conversion will appear to have been a greater honour than to have written the "Paradise Lost," or the "Principia" of Newton; when all the applause our ambition may have coveted or our vanity enjoyed, for success as popular lecturers, controversialists, or orators, will appear as fugitive and as valueless as the meteor of the night and bog to the glorious orb of day. How is it, that when invited to enter into fellowship with the Father in his

eternal councils, the Son of God in the design of the cross, and the Holy Spirit in the purposes of his outpouring upon the world, by the conversion of souls, we can so far lose sight of our high distinction; and, instead of seeking to people heaven with beings converted by our ministry, and to fill eternity with the fruits of our labours, can be contented to deal in the speculations of philosophy, the abstractions of intellectualism, or the artifices of rhetoric? How is it that we can have an aim so low, and satisfy ourselves with an ambition so grovelling, as to seek the applause of our fellow creatures instead of their souls? How? Because we do not believe, or believe with a weak and hesitating faith, the truths we preach. If we believed, we should speak. How? Because we are not contented to preach the good old truths which Peter, Paul, and John preached, to which martyrs set the seal of their blood, which Reformers lifted high amidst the gloom that surrounded them, and which have constituted the faith of the Church in every age: but, because these are acknowledged, common, every-day truths, which children are taught in our Sunday Schools, which the village itinerant carries to his rustic congregation, which are set forth in the multitude of religious tracts that are falling in showers upon the land: because there is no novelty in these matters, nothing to gratify literary pride, nothing to give a man a character for genius, nothing to mark progressive development, nothing to lift us above our fellows, no philosophy, no theoretic splendour; therefore, though these are God's ordained means for converting souls, and in the hand of the Spirit have proved their adaptation to this end in every country and every age and every Church where they have been

tried, yet, for the reasons just assigned, they are beginning to be neglected by many, who yet in some general way profess to believe in them. Be it so, that there is nothing of genius, nothing profoundly intellectual, nothing of gorgeous imagination or of philosophical spirituality in the gospel: it is the power of God unto salvation; and what an egregious mistake, what a miscalculation of true greatness, is it, to think that the conversion of souls is less worthy of our pursuit than to amuse with what is pleasing, to astonish with what is dazzling, or to gratify the curiosity with what is new!

It is inexpressibly delightful to think with what simple means, means within the reach of all, men may be converted to God. Surrounded in heaven by the souls which his "Rise and Progress" converted to God, it is over that work, Doddridge most exults now; and holy Baxter, in listening to the praises of those who were saved by his "Call to the Unconverted," blesses God with warmer gratitude for his writing that simple production, than for his writing all his hundred and thirty treatises besides. And for the encouragement of those whose hearts are set upon the conversion of souls, and sometimes are desponding because they feel that they have only ordinary abilities and common themes to work with, let the writer of this paper refer to another little work, which as to intellectual power is so simple, if not so feeble, that any of his brethren could have written it, which is yielding him a richer reward than all his other labours put together; a reward which he would be a fool to barter for all the laurels with which fame has wreathed the busts of Shakspere, Milton, or Wellington.

What is it that some of our most gifted ministers

coveted in the very zenith of their glory; and, when inhaling the incense of popular applause, sighed for and sorrowed because they feared they possessed it not? What was it that sometimes wrung the heart of dear and ever to be remembered McAll? A beloved brother present can testify that sometimes when his genius was dazzling the multitude by its brilliant coruscations, and drawing admiration in full tide upon him, his tears were abundant, and his feelings painfully excited, by a supposed want of success in his ministry. "I have admiration enough," he said; "but I want to see conversion. I care not what people say of my abilities if I may be useful to souls. God knows I do not want their applause, I want their salvation."

What have dying ministers looked back upon with the greatest satisfaction? Is it not upon their efforts for the conversion of souls? and is it not the neglect of this which fills them with the deepest humiliation and the profoundest sorrow? And it will be the same with us. To that solemn and closing scene of our earthly existence let us often in imagination transfer ourselves, and in the near prospect of eternity let us review life and all its labours, and now act accordingly. But beyond that there is one more scene, which cannot be too often before our minds, I mean our interview with our divine Master, when we shall surrender our ministry and give an account of our stewardship. Everything we have done to please ourselves, to establish our own reputation, and gratify our own taste, whatever applause it may have gained for us from our fellow creatures, will by him be all passed over in silence, and only that which we have done for the salvation of souls, directly or indirectly, will receive his gracious approba-

tion; in reference to such only will he say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Such words, from such lips, at such a time, will be even a martyr's ample recompense; and if we are faithful, that will be ours.*

* I am aware that this paper contains some things which are to be found, more expanded, in my work entitled "An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times," and on that account is less deserving of publication. As the other brethren would not allow their far more valuable papers to see the light unless this accompanied them, I consented to let it appear in print.

AFFECTIONATE COUNSELS TO STUDENTS OF THEOLOGY, ON LEAVING COLLEGE, AND ALSO TO YOUNG MINISTERS;

BEING AN ADDRESS, CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED, DELIVERED IN EBENEZER CHAPEL, JUNE 25, 1844,

To Mr Eustace Rogers Conder, A.M., Mr Henry Brown Creak, A.M., Mr Hill, Mr Thorp, Mr. Fairbrother, and Mr Holder, on the completion of their Studies and leaving Spring Hill College.

Published at the earnest request of the Tutors and the Students.

PREFACE.

I take the opportunity afforded by a preface to this address to say that, with many others, I have been much pained to observe the recent expressions of wounded feeling on the part of some young ministers, which have been called forth by certain papers that have appeared in the "Congregational Magazine;" and with no less grief, have read the resolutions which have been passed by the students of two of our Colleges, in reference to that periodical.

It is certain that an apprehension has been pretty extensively felt for some few years past, and therefore long before the papers above mentioned were written, that the preaching of some of our young ministers was considerably defective in those qualities both of manner and matter, which were likely, under God's blessing, to render it effective for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of those who, through grace, had believed: that in fact, without being in any sense heretical, it was neither so richly evangelical in doctrine, nor so plain pungent and popular in style and mode of address, as could be wished. This was considered to be in part the result of a greater attention paid in our Colleges to classical and philosophical studies, to the incorporation of those institutions with the London

University, and to a more extended intercourse with the seats of learning in Germany; whereby a degree of ambition for literary distinction and academic honours had been excited, which had a little corrupted some from the simplicity that is in Christ. The venerable Mr Jay, in an admirable sermon preached before the managers, friends, and students of Cheshunt College, and since published, which every young minister should read, uttered his oracular and impressive voice against this tendency of our age; and since then, others have expressed the same cautions and the same fears. It may be these fears are groundless, but it is certain at any rate they proceed from no unworthy motive, from no mean jealousy, from no dread of the legitimate effect of literature, from no unkind feeling toward the younger brethren, but from a truly paternal solicitude for the usefulness, honour, and comfort of the rising ministry, from an anxious care for the salvation of souls, and from a jealous solicitude for the welfare of our churches. We do not undervalue literature, we wish we had a thousand times more than we possess; we are not insensible to the beauties of classical composition, nor to the immense advantage to the cause of truth of the power of sound logic, of true philosophy, or of chaste eloquence; would that we had more of all these; but still what are they in comparison of, or without, the fulness of the glorious gospel of the blessed God?

Some of us are growing old in the ministry, and begin to be deeply anxious about our co-pastors or successors; and knowing by what means we have attained to a degree of public favour and usefulness, as far above our deserts as it is beyond our expectations; knowing

at the same time, what it is that is most adapted to meet the wants of human nature, the tastes of society, and the demands of our churches, we are tremblingly concerned to see a race of ministers rising up, who, when we have rested from our labours, shall sustain and carry on the work which we have been honoured to accomplish in our respective spheres of duty. Sorrowfully and humbly conscious of our defects, yet thankful for what God has wrought through our instrumentality, we desire to be followed by men every way our superiors, and we hear with pure and unutterable delight the testimony that is borne not only to the literary attainments, but to the sound theology, and the evangelical and effective strain of preaching, of many who are from time to time issuing from our Colleges. Too much may have been said of any exceptional cases, and too little caution may have been observed in giving utterance to it; but it has been in love to our younger brethren; and love is jealous, but at the same time, even the jealousy of affection is not always sufficiently careful in its language. I have a most solicitous concern for our denomination, and knowing that it is suffering not only from the assaults of its foes, who were never more determined in their hostility, but from the incompetency of many of its ministers, I venture to tell them that to be correctly dull, intellectually profound, or philosophically religious, will not secure or retain for them the favour of the churches, accomplish the ends of their ministry, or build up our denomination. To be useful, they must be popular; and to be popular, they must be richly evangelical, simple, earnest, impressive, and affectionate.

I deeply regret, certainly, the resolutions which the

students of two of our Colleges have passed in reference to the "Congregational Magazine." With the papers which have given offence, I have had nothing to do, though a few remarks accompanying Mr Cunningham's speech, which I ventured to insert in the last number, will perhaps by some be thought to partake of the same spirit. The excellent, able, and devoted Editor of that journal,* needs neither encomium, patronage, nor defence from me, else I would most willingly afford him all I could bestow. His has been the laborious, self-denying, and thriftless task, to sustain amidst the exertions of an extensive pastorate, and many public denominational engagements of all kinds, the honour of our having one representative in the department of sacred literature; and how ill requited and ill supported he has been in that labour of love, for it has been little else, his burdened mind and midnight hours of mental toil can well attest: it is his consolation, however, to know that if the younger ministers and students are disposed to withdraw their support from his work, his coevals and his seniors will gather the closer round him: and it is his hope, as well as that of his many and much attached friends, that his junior brethren will in a calmer mood, regret this somewhat hasty ebullition of juvenile displeasure. In the mean while, I can assure them of the most deep and tender solicitude we all feel for their future honour, usefulness, and comfort as ministers of Christ.

J. A. J.

The following extract from the Author's letter above referred to may be fitly introduced here.

* The late Rev. John Blackburn. Ed.

It is now no secret that opinions adverse to the commonly received doctrine of a special influence of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner to God, have obtained some prevalence among a few students of theology, and a small number of the pastors of our churches. In adverting to this fact, I do not wish to excite either alarm or suspicion. The views now adverted to are limited in their circulation, and are not likely, I hope, to find their way into many of our pulpits. The great body of our pastors are sound in the faith, and no apprehension need be entertained of any serious defection among them from doctrinal truth. And as to the alumni of our colleges, and our young ministers, I would charitably hope that there is no extensive departure from "the old paths" of our standard theology. That, in many cases, our modern preaching is not so richly imbued with evangelical sentiments and unction as could be wished, I am constrained to admit. There may be too little of truth, where there is no positive error; such defects, however, often lead to error, always to suspicion.

The erroneous opinions on the work of the Holy Spirit to which I have before alluded, are traced up, by some, to the introduction of American theology into this country; and I am not unwilling to admit that an incautious perusal and imitation of Finney's works may have had something to do with it; but it should be recollected that these modern notions are but a republication of Sandemanianism, so far at least as regards its views of subjective religion. The consequence, however, of associating them with American theology is, an indiscriminate prejudice against the writings and measures of the divines and preachers on the other side of the

Atlantic. Now, although much has been done and written in the United States which I should be sorry to see extensively adopted in this country, yet to pass a sweeping condemnation upon all American theology and American measures would be as injurious to ourselves as it would be unjust to the objects of our undiscriminating reprobation. We owe much to Edwards, Bellamy, and Dwight; and, among living authors, to Albert Barnes, Beecher, Skinner, and many others. Granting that in Finney there is much to condemn and to avoid, it must be allowed there is in the others much to admire and to imitate. Among the best of the American writers will be found some of the clearest on theology as a science, that can be found in any writers of the present day, though perhaps a little deficiency in rich evangelical unction; while among their preachers will be found some of the best models of dealing with the judgment and the conscience that can be found any where. What I ask for, then, in speaking of America, is discrimination. I should be sorry if, in avoiding the evil which is to be found there, we should neglect the good.

ADDRESS.

It may seem, my dear young brethren, an ungraceful introduction to this address, to say that I regret, on your account, that it is not delivered by my esteemed friend, Dr. Redford, who was invited for the occasion, but was prevented by absence from home from complying with the request of our Committee. My reluctance to undertake the service did not arise, I assure you, as you will readily believe, from any want of affectionate interest in your welfare, for in this I will not yield even to the honoured men at whose feet you have sat for instruction, but from an unaffected consciousness of my inability to conduct it with effect.

In thus publicly taking my leave of you, on your quitting Spring Hill College, I really feel that I am parting with so many personal and much endeared friends: for your uniform good conduct during your residence in our institution, has given you a high place in my regard and esteem. Some of you it was my privilege to admit to the visible fellowship of the christian church, others to meet monthly at the table of the Lord, to consider the conversion of all of you as in some measure the fruit of my labours, and all to receive from time to time at my house, for the purpose of friendly intercourse, and for imparting to you, as I

was able, the results of my observation and experience as a christian minister; and I would fain believe that our Saturday afternoon conferences will not be forgotten by you, as they certainly will not by me.

It is impossible that the friends of our College should see so large a number of its inmates leaving it at one time, in order to occupy their stations in the vineyard of the Lord, without having their sympathies awakened, and a very lively interest excited: for though you are not the first fruits of our academic grove, which the churches of our denomination have plucked, yet there never was at any one time so considerable a shaking of the trees, and so large a gathering of the produce.

The scene we now contemplate must be a rich and precious reward, not only to our esteemed and eminent professors, but especially to those devout and venerable women,* through whose munificence, in union with that of their sainted brother, you are placed in the situation you now occupy: and I do much rejoice that they are permitted to live and see this blessed result of their pious zeal and liberality, and thus, before they receive their richer and eternal reward in heaven, to have the evening of their day upon earth brightened by such an event as this.

I now, my brethren, first of all, offer you my sincere and hearty congratulations on this successful and honourable termination of your academic course, and the happy accomplishment, thus far, of the end for which you were received into this institution. Under tutors, in whom you, as well as all who know them, have reposed entire confidence, you have finished the prescribed curriculum, and without having had your

* Mrs Glover and Miss Mansfield.

health, and I hope I may add your piety, impaired by study, are going forth with considerable acquirements, to bestow upon the churches the advantages you have reaped here. Two of your number have distinguished themselves in one of our national seats of literature, and have gathered honours, which I trust will be felt by them not as an incitement to vanity or a matter of vain-glory, but as the reward of past labour, and a stimulus to future exertions.*

Painful instances have not been wanting, within your own circle, to remind you how deep are your obligations, (and I trust you are gratefully sensible of them,) to that grace which has preserved you to the end of your course in vigour of body, in christian consistency, in general good conduct, and in the possession of every qualification which warrants the committee to commend you to public favour with their fullest confidence and most entire esteem. A college life is necessarily a test of piety, of prudence, of temper; and at the same time of habits of application, of subordination, and of devotedness to the service of Christ; and of this fearful discoveries are sometimes made in all our seats of learning. Be devoutly thankful then, as you well may, and as many are on your behalf, for the manner in which you have passed the ordeal. Ere you quit the little apartment which has been at once your oratory and your study, where you have felt not only the anxieties of the student but the still deeper anxieties of the Christian, where you have softened the labour of mental pursuits by the elevating influence of communion with God, and mastered the first difficulties of your course by strength

* Mr Eustace Conder and Mr Creak, who took the A.M. degree at the London University.

and wisdom obtained through prayer, there erect your Ebenezer, and when you turn round to read for the last time the monumental inscription, "Hitherto the Lord has helped me," thank God and take courage; and in that hour when you shall be laying down the cares of the student's life for the yet more pressing solicitude of the pastoral office, even then let the grateful review of the past fill you with rejoicing hope for the future.

Be assured of the deep and lively interest we shall all ever take in your future career. We shall follow you wherever you go, with our sympathies and our prayers. Your names, your persons, and your characters are too well known, and too much loved, to be forgotten by us. With you, my beloved brother, who are going to quit your native shores, to brave the perils of the ocean and of an eastern climate, for the love you bear to Christ and souls,* we shall go in spirit to the all but boundless sphere of your missionary zeal, in the vast Empire of China, and as we see you struggling with the difficulties of its extraordinary language, and labouring to introduce the elements of divine life by the gospel to its teeming population, we shall pour out the prayer of faith for your success in accomplishing the object of your noble mission. Nor is it one only, but all of you that will draw our hearts after you; and wherever the Divine Head of the Church shall fix your stations, we shall visit you in spirit, and rejoice over your success, or mourn over your failure.

I now proceed to offer you a few affectionate counsels; and would to God, I had wisdom equal to the occasion. Such as I have, however, I now employ for your welfare.

* Mr Fairbrother, a missionary student, appointed by the London Missionary Society to China.

Deem me not in any degree suspicious or criminatory, when I say, that although you have made good use of the advantages which you have possessed for mental improvement in this Institution; although you have conducted yourselves with great and acknowledged propriety; although you have brought no stain upon your christian profession, and may have suffered no perceptible decline in your personal religion; yet notwithstanding all this, you should humble yourselves before God, ere you enter upon the ministerial career, for all the defects, omissions, and sins of a college life. Surely, in looking back you will find something which calls for self-abasement confession and contrition, some loss of precious time, some impurity of motive, some neglect of closet piety, some levity of temper, some trifling with sacred things, some spirit of emulation degenerating into envy and jealousy, some self-elation, and youthful vanity. Ah! which of us can look back on college days and pursuits, without our conscience smiting us, and a need to say with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, and remember not against me the sins of my youth." There may have been no sins visible to the eye of man, but have there been none visible to the eye of conscience? There may have been no blots, but have there not been specks? There may have been nothing to call for the censure and reproach of tutors or fellow students, but has there been nothing to call for the rebuke of your own judgment? Venture not forward then till you have rigidly scrutinised your heart, and most carefully examined your conduct. Carry no unpardoned sin away with you. Repair to the fountain of mercy, the cleansing stream of purity and peace. Go not forth followed with the voice of the

Saviour, "I have somewhat against thee. Repent, and do thy first works." Begin not your ministry under his frown, but seek to have his benediction upon the very commencement of your course. If your piety has suffered in vigour and vitality by study; if the Bible has been neglected for your class books; and prayer has degenerated into a form by the influence of lessons; if you feel that you are going forth from college less of a Christian than you entered it, you should sorrowfully confess it to God, and make it your first, your immediate, and your pressing business to repair the loss. You are not in a fit state of mind to do the work of the Lord if in an impaired state of personal religion. You are feeble and inapt, and must immediately seek to be "strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man." I wish each of you to be a vessel meet for the Master's use; and this you cannot be in a low state of experimental religion.

I next caution you against undue anxiety about your future course. If any of you have not yet an immediate prospect of being settled, let there be no sinful or painful solicitude about this. Your talents, your acquirements, your character, will by God's blessing soon provide for you an appropriate sphere, where they may be employed advantageously for his glory, and the good of his church. Do not be ambitious at first of high stations. Be content to be for a while in comparative obscurity, as most young plants grow best at first in the shade, and cannot bear the full blaze of the meridian sun: so may young ministers ripen best for greater publicity in comparative retirement. Not a few have been injured, if not spoiled, by being placed at once in the front rank. Do not look for situations

of ease, elegance, or comfort, so much as for spheres of labour and usefulness. It has been thought by some, that the young ministers of the present day have not enough of the missionary spirit: they must have good situations ready-made for them, and not such as they make for themselves. They have none of Paul's ambition to "preach the gospel where Christ was not named," and to lay their own foundation; they would rather enter into other men's labours, and build upon their foundation. Be it your disposition to follow where your master leads, to work in any part of his vineyard where he may be pleased to employ you, and to do any work on which he may set you. Leave yourselves in his hands: and confide in him fully.

As to those of you whose way is already prepared for you to churches that have invited you to take the oversight of their affairs, let not your hearts be troubled with too pressing and painful solicitude about discharging the onerous and responsible duties which are soon to devolve upon you. I would not abate one jot of that deep concern, of which I trust you are the subjects, about the weight of those solemn obligations which you are about to undertake. The young man who can quit the pursuits of a college for the oversight of a church, in a spirit of thoughtless levity; who can go laughing and skipping, as it were, from classical or even theological studies, to the care of immortal souls; evinces an ignorance or an insensibility, either of which betokens his utter unfitness for undertaking God's work. But I am supposing on the contrary that upon leaving college with the near prospect of settling as the pastor of a christian church, you are going forth with the burden of the Lord pressing heavily upon your hearts,

and that you are trembling under the awful weight; that as the object which you have contemplated at a distance draws near, you are all but bowed down and overwhelmed with a sense of the value of immortal souls, and the labour and responsibility of watching for them; that under an apprehension of the difficulties of church government, and the consciousness of your own ignorance and inexperience in matters of this kind, you are often crying almost in an agony, "Lord, who is sufficient for these things?" and that, like the prophet Jeremiah, when called to his office, you are saying, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." If there has been none of this self-diffidence, none of these holy tremblings, as from your little study you have looked over the imagined scene of your future labours, I have little hope of you. But I cannot persuade myself that you are thus insensible, and it is to allay your anxiety, and to calm the perturbation of mind to which it gives rise, that I now address to you the language of consolation and encouragement. Trust in the Lord. The review of his past dealings, in clearing away the difficulties of your path and enabling you so successfully to go through your studies, and probably in blessing your first efforts as students to preach his glorious gospel, may well inspire a hope that he will be with you throughout the course which is now opening before you, and to which he is beckoning you on with his own promised assistance, "Lo, I am with you. Fear not. My grace is sufficient for you." Obey this merciful injunction, and go forward with a firm step and a steady confidence. If you cannot but tremble, still rejoice while you tremble. Think how God has helped others. Your fathers in the ministry, to whom God

has given public favour, and long standing, and no inconsiderable usefulness, were once young and trembling like you; they too went forth with faltering step and palpitating heart, from the study to the pulpit, and now, amidst declining years and hoary hairs, can speak of the faithfulness of God, in the help they have received.

It is of vast importance you should thoroughly understand, steadily contemplate, and constantly pursue the great end and object you are going forth to seek, and for which you have been preparing by the various studies of the College. In setting out upon any new course of action, every man should well understand his business. His object must be accurately defined, and distinctly seen; else his aim cannot be fixed, or his course steady. He will be as one fighting uncertainly and beating the air; or at any rate will be often diverging from his path, and pursuing something opposed or subordinate to his main object. And what is your end? What are you now going to seek? What ought you to seek?

There has been of necessity and with propriety much, in your collegiate studies, of literary and scientific instruction: you have devoted much time to the classics, to the subtleties of metaphysics, to the inductions of logic, and to the demonstrations of the abstract sciences; for learning and science are the handmaids of religion; and you must have been men of obtuse minds and cold hearts, if you have not acquired a taste for those pursuits. Your danger lies, not in loving them too little, but of regarding them too much for their own sakes, and of thus transferring your affection from the divine mistress to the earthly handmaids. If then, my young brethren, you are going away only to cultivate

a literary taste, and to revel in the luxuries of Greek and Roman learning; to wander in the shady labyrinths of metaphysics; or to plunge into the depths of mathematics: if you are going away merely to converse with books and to bask in the sunshine of genius, or even to become antiquarians in theological lore, you had better seek, if you can find it, some literary fellowship, some haunt of the muses; for you have made a mistake in directing your eye to the pulpit, and determining to enter the christian ministry. You may almost imagine that you see the angel of the Lord, with a drawn sword standing in your path, as he did in that of Balaam, and in the name of the Lord ordering you back. As subordinate and auxiliary, all the objects of pursuit that I have just mentioned are legitimate and proper; but as the end of your life, they are unlawful and proscribed. Your business is to preach the gospel, to build up the church of Christ with souls converted by your ministry, to make the Bible paramount in the world, and promote the ends for which Christ died upon the cross. Your whole occupation is comprehended in that sublime sentence of the apostle, "They watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief." This is it; nothing more, and nothing less than this: and what mind but the infinite one can grasp it in its whole and wide extent?

> "They watch for souls, for which the Lord
> Did heavenly bliss forego;
> For souls that must for ever live
> In rapture or in woe."

As you leave the scene of your studies, ponder, intensely ponder the wondrous words of Christ, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and

lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" As you depart from college, let it be in a solemn, pensive mood, and say within yourself, "A soul, an immortal soul, what a being is a soul! What a catastrophe is the loss of a soul, and what an event, its salvation! And I am now going to watch for souls: to prepare for this I was brought here, and I am going away to carry it into execution. My whole life is now to be spent in watching for souls: for this I am to study, to pray, to preach. Above this, besides it, and apart from it, I am to have no object, no being: and to this, O God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of souls, I now solemnly consecrate myself. Amen."

With such an object before you, do not, on quitting college, my brethren, give up college habits of study. Do not cease to be learners when you become teachers. Let not the pulpit of the minister become the grave of the student, where of the departed scholar nothing is seen but a ghostly shade, and nothing heard but the vox et præterea nihil. Be ever the studious man. Here you have laid a good foundation against the time to come; but it is only a foundation; go and raise upon it a goodly structure of general and sacred knowledge. Let nothing be allowed to break up those habits of mental application and culture, which it has been the aim of your tutors to assist you in forming. Your own conscience must now be as rigid in exacting your daily tasks, as they have been. You cannot keep your standing among your brethren, much less rise to eminence, without great, unwearied, and persevering diligence. It is to the neglect of this, that so many who were promising as students, fail as ministers. They act like persons engaged in worldly matters, who having by some means

acquired in the commencement of their trading life, a certain portion of property, and thus secured a capital, which though not enough to live upon, was amply sufficient by diligence and perseverance to advance them to wealth, instead of seeking to increase their stock, become idle and luxurious, live upon their little capital as if it would never be exhausted, and soon sink to poverty and contempt. You, my brethren, have a good capital of varied knowledge to begin with, but it is far too little to live upon. It is quite too soon for you to think of retiring from study. You may become rich and able also to enrich others; but that is not the case yet. The otium cum dignitate, if it shall ever belong to you, is far enough off at present. Those attainments which are now your honour, will, if not greatly augmented, be your disgrace five years hence. "You must incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yea, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek for her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure, then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

If it be not presumptuous in one so little competent to give advice on such a subject, especially after the advantages you have enjoyed, I would offer a few suggestions which occur to my own mind, and may be of some service, perhaps, in guiding your future pursuits in the study.

As to the precise quantity of time to be daily devoted to study, so much depends on local and personal circumstances, that no general rule can be laid down; and if you are as much athirst for knowledge as you should be, none is necessary, for you will give all the

time you can command, and which is not imperatively demanded for other occupations. The man who will be rich, needs no specification of the number of hours he should give daily for the acquisition of wealth; he will devote to it all the time he can command: and he who is equally resolved to get knowledge, will act in the same way. The fixed and resolute purpose to acquire learning is the great secret. As a vague hint, I should say, that if you do not settle in large congregations, or in large towns, a weekly average of seven or eight hours daily should be secured for your study: and in order to do this, I most earnestly admonish you to rise early: do not, I conjure you, waste your precious hours in slothful slumber. A habit of early rising formed now, will add years, and some of the best ones too, to your life. Avoid nocturnal studies, they are injurious to health, to domestic order, to piety, and in the long run, to personal improvement. Dr. Owen said, and it was a great deal for such a man to say, he would gladly give up all the knowledge he gained after ten o'clock, if he could get back all the health he lost by sitting up. You must take care of your health; you owe it not only to yourselves, but to your churches and to God. Health is as truly a talent to be improved as any other: early rising will invigorate it, and night studies will destroy it. Much will depend upon yourselves whether sufficient time for improvement be secured. Consecrate your mornings to study, and let it be distinctly known to your flocks that you have done so; and that except for important business, you wish and expect no intrusion on you during those hours. Should you enter into married life, a prudent wife will stand between you and idle callers. Cut short all business as speedily as

possible. You have heard of the minister who had written in large characters and in a conspicuous place, in his study, "Be Quick." Avoid loose, desultory habits, and a lounging, sauntering disposition, whether in the house or out of it. Time, like money in the hands of thriftless and improvident persons, slips away in dribblets: on the other hand, it is astonishing how accumulation goes on in their hands, who look well to the littles. Remember that he who lives for the salvation of souls, is the last man on earth who should allow himself to waste an hour. Time and study are the means by which he is enabled to accomplish his object.

Do not, during the first years of your ministry, allow yourselves to be placed on many committees, especially such as have no immediate connection with your ministerial and pastoral duties. A profitless ambition to be thought men of public spirit, and to acquire influence in the town, has led many to give that time to local business which was demanded for their studies and for their pastoral duties; and their meagre discourses and declining congregations have proclaimed the consequences of their folly. Our place of influence is the pulpit, and ability in managing business, and any respect which may be shewn us on that account, will never make up for obvious deficiency in our own department. Nor must you allow your time to be consumed by profitless reading. Keep down an inclination to meddle too much with politics. Our most useful ministers have had least to do with this thorny subject. I do not pretend to draw the line up to which a christian minister may go, and over which he must not pass: but I would say as a general rule, your care should be to keep well within it. In most cases, there is scarcely time to

attend to the concerns which unquestionably belong to us, and about which there is no doubt or difficulty; why then should we plunge into doubtful matters? The newspaper in many cases, proves a felon of the minister's time, and thus robs his own soul and the souls of his flock, of what is more precious than rubies. My dear brethren, you are going to labour for eternity, and with such a work upon your hands, "Redeeming the time," must be your motto.

Do you ask me respecting the subject of your studies? I answer, begin with your Bibles; study the scriptures critically, in the original languages. The Bible is the book of our profession. I think many of us have erred here, in not making the Bible, by itself, and for itself, the subject of enquiry. We have not set apart time enough, and regularly kept to it, for this purpose. We have studied it in the uninspired books which we have been reading, and for our sermons as we composed them; but we have not set apart time for the express purpose of studying the sacred record itself as a distinct and separate object. A man would bless God at the close of his ministry, for the practice of devoting an hour a day to the investigation of the scriptures. I do not, of course, hold with those fanatics who would read no book but the Bible, and who would in effect repeat the sentiments and the mischief of the Caliph Omar, when he burnt the Alexandrian library, men who would consign to the flames all our divinity, under the notion that if it speaks according to the Bible, it is needless, and if it speaks against the sacred volume, is injurious; but I do say that the Bible is far too little studied, as the fount of all our religious knowledge. I think our scriptural knowledge is not sufficiently extensive, and

that in consequence our sermons are not sufficiently textual or illustrative of the word of God. The expository mode of preaching, which I hope you will extensively adopt, would necessarily lead to this, and would be of great service not only to your people but to yourselves. Give much time then, my brethren, to the critical examination of the Scriptures.

Still, I recommend in addition to this, much attention to Biblical criticism and Theology. You ought to be good divines, and conversant with those systems and writers which are known in all our circles. Make yourselves acquainted with the writers of the Puritan and Nonconformist schools: there is a raciness, a fund of pious sentiment, of rich experimental religion, and of profound doctrine, which when recast in the mould of modern and more correct taste, and united with a stricter exegetical method of interpreting Scripture, will be of great service to you, as they have been to others who have gone before you. Coming on to modern theological writers, I recommend you to familiarise yourselves with the works of the acute, philosophical, profound and pious Jonathan Edwards, and those of Andrew Fuller. I know nothing like the latter for the combination of doctrinal, practical and experimental religion. Of writers still later, I scarcely need advise you to procure and read the books of Drs. Pye Smith, Wardlaw, Russell of Dundee, Payne, and Magee. The young man who within the first two years of his ministry, will go through the works I have just enumerated and study them well, will be no indifferent theologian. I also advise you to make yourselves acquainted with the most celebrated writers of the English Episcopal Church. The wonderful fulness and

copiousness of Barrow, the rich and boundless fancy of Jeremy Taylor, the devotion of Hall, the caustic wit and nervous force of South, and the majesty of the predecessor of them all, the great Hooker, with many others, will amply reward any time you can spare, and any labour you may bestow, to make yourself conversant with them. It is not my intention, of course, to lay down a regular and full course of theological reading; this after the able instruction you have received would be quite unnecessary, even if I were competent for the task; but merely to suggest a few books which at once deserve and will reward the attention and study of a young minister, and which I have found useful to myself. And should you wish to enter upon a course of reading connected with the great controversies of the day, I mean with Popery and Puseyism, read Dr. Fletcher's Lectures on Popery, Edgar's Variations of Popery, Rogers' Anti-Popery, and the sermons in the Morning Exercises; with all these I am acquainted, and know their excellence. On the agitated question of Anglo-Catholicism, many excellent works have been published, but none to my taste equal to Mr Lindsay Alexander's Lectures.

It would be a great discredit to you to give up classical literature, and yet is it not a fact that some of our ministers, on leaving college, part company for ever with the great masters of antiquity? This, I am aware, is the result of their having made too slender attainments in scholarship, during their academic curriculum. Amidst the pressing engagements of their pastorate, when they enter upon their ministerial life, they find little leisure and less inclination for the school-boy drudgery of consulting lexicons, and poring over

grammars: and thus the only benefit they derive from their classical studies (and it is no small one I admit,) is the mental discipline they afforded at college. Hence the vast importance of diligence in these pursuits during the academic course, that the difficulties which attend the laying of a good foundation of learning may be all mastered by the student, and the minister have nothing to do but to build the superstructure with ease. A few hours a week, for the first five years, devoted to such studies, in addition to what occurs in the usual course of reading, where his attainments have been respectable, would enable a minister to acquire all the scholarship that would be sufficient for the purposes of utility and enjoyment.

It would be of great service to a young minister to go again with great care and attention through a course of Mental and Moral Philosophy, and Logic. As to periodical literature, science, and works of taste, these may and should come in to fill up the interstices of time, and as matters of recreation. To be ignorant of the existence, outlines, and bearings of any great subject of human enquiry, especially if it engage the attention of the day, will not be creditable to your literary character. The more general knowledge you possess, the more weight you will command in society, and the better fitted you will be to attach the young people of the educated classes to you, and to exert a proper influence over them.

It is evident from all this, that fixed and inviolable habits of close application are indispensable and important. I again and again reiterate the injunction, give yourselves to study; not to be mere book-worms, or literary misers, or recluses of the study; but to be

the better fitted for what after all is the great end of your calling, to be preachers of God's word and pastors of his church. I want you to get knowledge for the same purpose a christian tradesmen should seek to get wealth, not to hoard, but to spend it for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. I enjoin all these acquirements, not to take you off from the solemn and momentous duty of watching for souls, but that you may be more fitted for it. The good scholar is subservient to the good divine, and the good divine to the good preacher. Cultivate your understanding, enrich and strengthen your mind, to enable you more powerfully to carry on all your various duties, public and private, for saving souls. Let all this be only to make you a polished shaft in the quiver of Emmanuel.*

Do not imagine, my young Brethren, that by my next counsel, I am going to strike out the spark of vanity, to foster worldly ambition, or excite a thirst after human applause, when I say, aim at excellence,

* As an auxiliary to the acquisition of knowledge, I recommend two things to you at the commencement of your ministerial life. First, to provide yourself with Common Place books, one for entering any text that strikes you in the course of your reading, with the view you took of it at the time. Glimpses flash upon the mind sometimes, which if not caught at the instant are lost for ever; to those embryo sermons you may recur when you are looking for a text to preach from. Another book should be a receptacle of all you read; that is a reference to it, whenever you deem it important to preserve the remembrance of it. The subject, the volume, and page should all be entered, and these day books of knowledge may be occasionally classified and posted. But another thing I recommend is, an abstract of your library, written out not merely in the form of a catalogue of books, but of subjects, which if the number of volumes be not very large, may be done so that you may be able to put your hand upon every sermon, and every treatise or discourse as you want it.

and even eminence, in your holy calling as preachers. Mortify these your members which are upon the earth, and crucify these affections and lusts of your mind. They are the besetting sins of the ministerial office, have cost many a devoted servant of Christ groans and tears, and filled him with self-abasement and self-abhorrence. Watch, labour, and pray against self; and nothing less than such resistance will keep it down. Self-seeking is a sin against which you must ever be on your guard. It is a sin that insinuates itself into the closet, the study, and the pulpit, and corrupts not only our sermons, but our very prayers: still notwithstanding this, I say, aim at eminence in your profession. No man should be satisfied with mediocrity of excellence; as Christians we are commanded to go on unto perfection, and so we are as ministers. Whatever is lawful to be done, should be done well; and the best things should be done best. In proportion to the importance of the line of action in which any one is moving, should be his solicitude to move in it well. Measure, if you can, the importance which attaches to your calling. Think of the interests which depend upon it, the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the salvation of the lost world. Yours is the only class of men which, in the full import of the phrase, labours for immortality. Infinite consequences of weal or woe, both to yourselves and to others, hang on every step of that course on which you are now about to enter. Pause, and ponder. Survey your work, and summon all the energies of your soul to its performance, and embark your deepest sympathies in its success.

But what do I mean by eminence? Not eminence in learning or in science, in oratory or rhetoric, in the

genius that dazzles or the taste that delights, except as all these may be subservient, which they unquestionably may, to something higher and better, but eminence in usefulness, and all the qualifications that prepare for it; eminence in that which made Whitfield and Wesley, yea, Peter and Paul, illustrious; eminence as faithful, devoted, successful ministers of God's word. O to be useful in winning souls to Christ; in widening the reign of truth, holiness, love, and happiness; in multiplying the trophies of the cross; in peopling the realms of immortality with the spirits of redeemed men; and swelling the praises of eternity. An angel alone could sing the honours of that man, who through grace is the instrument of accomplishing all these objects in an eminent degree. Such a man may look from his height of distinction upon all earth-born geniuses as immeasurably below him, in whatever department of action they labour, or to whatever renown they rise.

Now in order to this, you must be eminent as preachers. Consider the power of the pulpit when well occupied. Dwell upon the majesty and force of eternal truth, when aided by the living voice and "human face divine," and accompanied by the blessing of the Spirit of God. The power of oratory has been confessed by all nations, savage and civilized, ancient and modern. That truth which has been read many times in the closet without producing conviction or emotion, has, when announced from the pulpit, been blessed in thousands of instances for the conversion of the soul to God. Many a preacher by the simple, earnest, and unaffected persuasiveness of his manner has carried away his hearers upon the rapid and resistless tide of his own feeling; they heard what he said, and saw what he

felt; his eye helped his tongue, and the workings of his countenance disclosed the secrets of his heart; every look and every action was vocal; his manner was an impressive comment upon his matter, and breaking down the limits which the feebleness of language in some cases imposes upon the communication of thought, gave his audience a view and a sense of his subject, which no book, however eloquent, ever could have conveyed to them. And the preacher must have heart as well as head. Learned, elaborate, philosophical, or logical discourses, but wanting genial feeling, may, like the stars on a wintry night, sparkling in their high ethereal courses, attract notice and admiration; but they shed little light upon the path of the lost traveller, and less warmth upon his shivering frame. There surely must be still a latent power in the pulpit not now proved, because not known, which, with some few exceptions, has not been exhibited since the days of Whitfield. "Theology affords the best field for tender, sublime, and solemn eloquence. The most glorious objects are presented, the most important interests are discussed, the most tender motives are urged." The councils of eternity are laid open, the secrets of heaven disclosed, and the deepest thoughts of omniscient wisdom are announced in the words of inspiration. Voices from the excellent glory are echoed, and "spirits from the vasty deep" are called up before the imagination of the hearers by the more than magic wand of the preacher. God and angels; the treason of Satan; the creation, ruin, and recovery of a world; the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God; the day of judgment, with all its awful solemnities; a burning universe; an eternal state of ineffable

felicity in heaven, or of inconceivable torment in hell: all these stupendous subjects set forth in prophetic visions, gospel narratives, apostolical epistles, and apocalyptic symbols, pass before our eyes, and are the materials of our discourses. What compared with these were the themes of those statemen and orators, the thunders of whose eloquence have shaken the forum or the senate house. What, in ancient times, were the dissensions of the states of Greece, or the ambition of Philip? What the grandeur and victories of Rome, or the treason of Catiline? Or what in modern times have been the struggles of Colonies, wise enough and strong enough to be independent, against the fatherland; or the conflicts of a people determined to be free, against their hereditary despot; or the noble efforts of patriots to reform parliaments, and to cleanse the Augean stable of political corruption; or even the long doubtful contest for the emancipation of the negro slave? If we had faculties, energies, piety, and zeal, in any tolerable proportion adequate to the wielding of such topics as ours; if we felt our subjects and took as much pains to make others feel them as Demosthenes and Cicero, or Chatham and Pitt, Burke and Fox, Grattan and Wilberforce did, in regard to the matters on which they spake, we should be the most eloquent men on earth. With the Bible supplying celestial radiance to our torches, how might they, and should they, blaze with a more than earthly brightness!

How is it, then, that of those who leave our colleges, so few attain to eminence as preachers? In some, and perhaps in not a few cases, I am aware there is natural disqualification in the way: there is no gift of commanding utterance, no fervour of imagination, no

strength of intellect, no enthusiasm of soul; and a fault lies somewhere that such persons were ever sent into the ministry, for neither reverend imbecility, nor sacred inanity, nor learned dulness, will do for the pulpit at any time, much less for the present, when all around, without, and within the church is in a state of high excitement. Rush lights will not do in the pulpit, when coal gas is blazing everywhere else. But the failure in other cases is not to be traced to a cause so innocent as inability. It is not a want of talent, but of tact; it is not ignorance, but indolence; it is not a deficiency of voice, but of soul; not a physical inability of any kind, but a moral one; it is, in fact, a want of heartiness, diligence, and earnestness. The men have not thrown their whole selves into the work. They have wanted the burning zeal for God, the melting pity for souls, the hungering and thirsting after usefulness, the labour in study, the self-cultivation, the constant painstaking, and the fervent piety, which alone can conduct to eminence. Or else they were most concerned for a comfortable settlement, a home of elegance or comfort: or they made the fatal mistake at the outset of determining to be scholars, metaphysicians, or philosophers, instead of being preachers and pastors. They went to their ministry with the purpose of composing what they meant should be fine sermons, and secure the approbation and applause of those whom they considered the more intellectual portion of their hearers, and thus failed in every thing. They forgot that their congregations were sinners that needed pardon, souls perishing in their sins that needed salvation; or else that they were men and women harassed by six days' labour, wearied by the cares, and burdened with

the sorrows of time, collected round their pulpit on the day of rest, to be soothed and invigorated by the prospects and hopes of heaven and eternity; that these children of want and woe had come to have their minds instructed, their cares softened, their sorrows assuaged, their consciences purified, and their hearts healed by the music of gospel truth; and to treat them with nothing but philosophical essays, metaphysical disquisitions, the meatless, marrowless bones of criticism, the thorns of controversy, the flowers of rhetoric, or the mere slip-slop of words without thought, or thoughts without connexion, order, or intelligible meaning: oh! what was it but to mock the hungry by offering stones for bread, and to insult the thirsty by presenting froth instead of the crystal stream of the water of life?

To be eminent as preachers, you must be eminently evangelical in the themes of your pulpit ministrations. You remember that the artist of the statue of the tutelary goddess on the Acropolis of Athens, so wrought his own name into her shield that it was impossible to efface it without destroying the whole. Let it not be your own name, but that which is above every name, which you work up into all your sermons. It is said, you know, that Phidias in the further indulgence of his vanity, introduced his own portrait into the Battle of the Amazons in the frieze of the Parthenon, and that the Greeks considered that such a profanation, that notwithstanding the glory which his genius had shed upon Athens, they threw him into prison, and left him to die there. When it was considered by Pagans such an inexpiable offence for mortal man to attempt to share the glory of their gods, shall Christian ministers, when they seek to usurp the glory of Christ

by endeavouring to fix the attention of their hearers upon themselves instead of upon their divine Lord, have their sin hidden from their eyes? Preach Christ, my brethren, and for Christ's own sake. Exalt Christ, not yourselves. Exhibit Christ, in the divinity of his person, the efficacy of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession, the fulness of his grace, the freeness of his invitations, the perfection of his example; in all his mediatorial offices and scripture characters; as the Alpha and Omega of your whole ministry. Let your sermons be fragrant with the odour of his name: carry this precious unguent to the pulpit, break the alabaster box, and let the precious perfume fill the house in which you minister. Christ himself has told you the secret of popularity and success, where he said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." With this divine loadstone magnetise your sermons: here lies the attraction. Preach as in full view of all the wonders of Calvary, and let it be as if while you spoke you felt the Saviour's grace flowing into and filling your soul, and as if that moment you were sympathising with the apostle in his sublime raptures, "God forbid I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When Popery and Puseyism are lifting so extensively the crucifix, or at any rate a mere ceremonial religion, let us exhibit the cross in all its grandeur and attractions. This is our strength, and our defence, and will ensure our success. Turning with disgust from the puerilities substituted for the doctrine of the cross, the people will feel afresh the power of gospel truth, if we have but the wisdom and fidelity to present it. Denied it from their own pastors, our hearers will go for it to the Wesleyans and the evangelical clergy of the Church

of England. And who can wonder, or blame them? Dissent is a poor thing without the gospel, the shell without the kernel, the chaff without the wheat. It has nothing for the imagination, nothing for mere taste; and if that which alone can quiet the conscience and feed the heart, be wanting in its preaching, I mean the fulness of the gospel, it will be left by all those who are more concerned for their salvation, than they are for their nonconformity. Thank God, there is yet no extensive indication of this state of things; I hope there never will be: but in order that there may not, let our young ministers remember, that it is not by intellectuality, nor by bitter controversy, nor by being public men, but by fully, faithfully, ably, and earnestly preaching the gospel, that they will be useful either in the higher object of saving souls, or the secondary one of building up their own denomination. Let the impression be produced by your preaching, my brethren, that Spring Hill College, though affording rich advantages for a literary and philosophical education, is a school for evangelical truth. Convince the churches that the character of our students, as to substance, is made up of personal religion, and as to form, is cast in the gospel mould, and receives only its polish from learning and science.

Every thing I have said implies that in order to eminence there must be simplicity as opposed to what is artificial, affected and egotistical, both in style and manner. It has been well remarked by an American writer, that

"Some giant of a Johnson with all the encumbrance of artificial structure, has protruded his unwieldly form through the world, and Samson-like, has poised the pillars of the house, notwithstanding his

fetters of brass; and his humble imitators are without his might trying what they can do with both hands bound. They are placing perfection in sonorous words, in stateliness of movement, in an antithetical balance of clauses, and are running from nature as fast as they can. 'I seek divine simplicity in him who handles things divine.' It may be rested upon as an everlasting maxim, that the eloquence best fitted to thrill the heart of a philosopher, is that which melts the heart of a child."

Here let me warn you against the sad mistake of confounding mere noisy declamation bluster and rant with earnestness and animation. Nothing is more offensive to persons of taste, more repulsive even to the untrained multitude, or more destructive of the effect of the tender and solemn truths of the gospel, than emotionless vociferation. I have heard it said of Talma, the celebrated French actor, that he had made it a study for twenty years to acquire earnestness without vehemence. Robert Hall was a fine specimen of this; no one can have heard that extraordinary man, in his happiest moods, without being as much impressed with the intense feeling and animation of his manner, as astonished by the grandeur of his conceptions, and delighted by the correctness of his taste. His voice was of little compass and by no means musical, he was in the commencement of his sermons impeded by a slight hesitation, and his tones were low and his words were delivered slowly, but his grand thoughts were manifestly the result of his deep and anxious feeling, and the stream of his eloquence soon acquired the force of a torrent, and the grandeur of a cataract. Let me then entreat you to endeavour to acquire the great secret of earnestness without vehemence, and to avoid the reproach of having the contortions of the sibyl without her inspiration. In guarding against the one extreme of

being pulpit statues, cold, motionless, and inanimate, do not run into the other of being pulpit furies.

Before I leave the department of preaching, allow me to refer your consideration to one particular kind of preaching, I mean the expository, which I am sorry to say is far too little practised in the modern English pulpit. To this your attention has been directed by your able and excellent theological tutor. I know it has been supposed, or at any rate said, that people do not like exposition. I believe the contrary to be the fact, and that it is the ministers and not their people, that are not fond of it. If it has been tried and produced dislike, it must be from one or other of these causes; either it has been conducted too much in the way of the German Exegesis, in which there is so much minute and anxious verbal criticism as to be almost tedious even to a scholar; or else in such a loose and slovenly manner as to disgust even a superficial hearer and thinker, and to produce the conviction, that it had been taken up from mere indolence. Bad exposition is usually the worst of all bad sermons; but if it be well done, (and it has no difficulty beyond the reach of any one who will give himself the trouble to acquire the power,) the people are sure to like it. There are so many advantages connected with it, that it is surprising to me it should not be adopted by all preachers. How much perplexity and waste of time does it save in the selection of texts and subjects: what an opportunity does it afford to introduce topics into the pulpit which we should neglect but for this method; topics which if they did not come in regular course, would be set down to personality on the part of the preacher! If the minister takes the view of the passage which his hearers have

previously formed, they are pleased with him for thinking as they do; if he bring out a view which did not occur to them, they give him credit for a deeper insight into the meaning of a passage than they possessed. It leads to an extended acquaintance with the Bible, both on the part of ministers and people. So far as my experience goes, and I have practised this method from the commencement of my ministry, I can bear emphatic testimony to its acceptableness, although I make no pretensions to be a skilful expositor. If you feel a difficulty at commencing what may be called a regular exposition, so early in your ministry, begin with a consecutive course of sermons, for which the eighth chapter of the Romans would furnish a fine field, or the eleventh of Hebrews: or occasionally take a long parable or fact of the New Testament, and acquire for yourself tact, and produce in your people a taste, for this method of instruction. But be sure and let it be done well, and rendered interesting, as it certainly may be with painstaking, and you will have no cause to complain of a want of relish for it. Some ministers give short, current remarks on the chapters which they read in the course of the service, and preach a sermon afterwards. For my own part, I have a feeling which makes me wish that God's own word, unattended by any remark of my own, should be heard during a part of the service allotted to public worship.

There is however another matter which though mentioned last, is the first of all qualifications and preparations for eminent usefulness in the ministry of the word, and that is a high degree of personal religion. You cannot have forgotten, that the very first question proposed to you on your presenting yourselves

as candidates for examination before the Board of Education, was this: "What do you consider to be the primary and most essential qualification for the christian ministry?" and that you then promptly and firmly replied, "Personal religion:" and now after five or six years' acquaintance with the various branches of human learning; after strengthening your intellect by the severe mental discipline to which you have been willingly subject; and when you are going forth with great and various acquisitions of knowledge, let me again repeat to you, and press upon you, the first lesson you learnt within this Institution, that personal religion is the primary and most essential qualification for the christian ministry. If you are leaving us with less piety than you brought here, you have sustained a loss for which no acquirements can be an adequate compensation. After nearly forty years' acquaintance with the duties and difficulties of the sacred office, with the details of my own experience, and with the history of many of my brethren, I am entirely convinced that our chief defects both as pastors and as preachers, lie in our shortcomings as Christians. I do not mean to apply this to our own denomination exclusively, but to the ministry of all sections of the christian church. It is the high devotional spirit that is wanting. There is much truth in what Alexander Knox says in his correspondence with Bishop Jebb.

"Christian preaching can arise only from a christian mind and heart. This is the great want in the preaching of to-day: there is no spirit in it. It is the result of a kind of intellectual pumping; there is no gushing from the spring. Our Saviour speaking to the woman of Samaria of the happiness which his religion would bring into the bosoms of those who cordially embraced it, elegantly and expressively represents it by a well of water in the breast, springing up into

everlasting life. Where this is in a ministry, it will spring out, as well as spring up; and it will be felt to be living water from the pleasure and refreshment it conveys almost to minds hitherto unaccustomed to such communications. What Horace says is quite in point:

> Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunto;
> Et, quocunque volunt animum auditoris agunto.
> Ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adsunt
> Humani vultus. Si vis me flere, dolendum est
> Primum ipsi tibi; tunc tua me infortunia lædent.

The pulchra is all that a man, who does not himself feel, can attain to: the dulcia is the offspring of an impressed and interested heart. But if such effects were to be produced by the mere feeling exhibition of human distress, what may not be looked for from divine truths, interesting to the hearer, no less than to the speaker; and interesting beyond all that can be conceived to every natural sentiment of man, when done justice to, in the same way that Horace here demands for the drama?"

When you have noticed the apostle Paul's success, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, then read his epistles, and see in his heavenly piety, whence he acquired his power and pathos as a preacher: and when you have beheld Whitfield in the pulpit, and witnessed his extraordinary might in the conversion of souls, trace the preacher to his retirement, and learn from his habits of communion with God, the secret of his resistless eloquence. You must then, be men of the closet, as well as of the study, if you would be mighty in the pulpit: and if you would wrestle with men in preaching, so as to prevail, you must gain your strength by wrestling with God in prayer so as to prevail. Even the high themes of redeeming love and saving grace, will hang like icicles from the lips of that man whose heart is cold; instead of coming forth, as they should do, like flames of holy fire: or to revert to the Saviour's beautiful allusion, the want or the weakness of personal

religion will freeze the sermon at its spring; while earnest, lively, spiritual religion will cause each discourse to gush forth as a sparkling ebullition of living water from an overflowing heart.

Will it be out of place or season, if I offer a few hints as to the best and most likely method of keeping up the life and power of religion in the soul?

I need not enjoin you to read the Scriptures daily, for it cannot be supposed you will neglect so obvious a duty; but I may suggest the necessity of your reading them devotionally, as Christians. Come to the word of God in that meek simplicity and docility of mind, which you will recommend to your congregation, dropping for a season the critic and the polemic. We all find this somewhat difficult; the mind of the minister is ever thinking of his sermons, and looking out for texts, and he can hardly suspend it, when he comes to his Bible as a disciple; thus the current of devotional feeling is arrested, and instead of feeding upon the bread of life, the mind is engaged in critically analysing its properties. Some read the Scriptures, even in their closets and devotional exercises, in the original languages. I doubt the propriety of this, because it is almost certain to engage the analytical powers at the expense of spirituality of mind: and after all it is not by the niceties of criticism, and the delicacies of composition, we can feed our own souls, any more than we can the souls of our hearers; but by the plain, substantial truths of revelation. Leave these matters to the seasons of studying the word of God, already recommended; and in the solemn and sacred hours of devotion, open your hearts, as well as minds, to the illuminating, sanctifying, and consoling power of the truth

as it is in Jesus, remembering that the Bible is a book for your souls, as well as for your sermons.

In addition to this, keep up with life and regularity, the ordinary seasons and the spirit of private prayer. Prayer, so we tell our hearers, is the vital breath of the Christian: is it less so of the minister? I have long been convinced that a minister's public prayers do as much to keep up the life of religion in the hearts of his people, as his sermons. There is an immense difference, as to the effect produced by even liturgical services, according to the manner in which they are read: tones are the index and expression of feeling, and feeling is sympathetic. Some men extinguish emotion in others, by the cold and heartless manner of reading or praying; others enkindle it, by their deep solemnity and pathos. If this be true in application to liturgical formularies, how much more so is it in application to extemporaneous prayer. Of how much importance, (far more than has been generally thought) is it then that ministers should conduct with propriety, and in an interesting manner, their public devotions? We who reject the forms, lofty and noble as some of them are, of the Church of England, should take great care to substitute for them something better than drawling inanity, incoherent rhapsody, noisy, almost boisterous vehemence, or devotions made up of half preaching and half praying. I do not want elaborate, artificial prayers, composed of high flown language, but divine simplicity without poverty or meanness; variety without strangeness; intensity without clamour; solemnity without dulness: in short, the utterances of a convinced, broken, yet confiding and grateful heart, communing with a holy

and merciful God.* We have cause for thankfulness, that so many of our ministers possess, in an eminent degree, this edifying talent. And how are this public gift and grace of prayer to be acquired? Only by the habit of constant, devout, and elevated communion with God, in the closet. I think our hearers form more accurate opinions of us, as to our devotional habits, than we are aware. Our public prayers are very often made by them a criterion of our private ones. Be men of devotion then, my brethren. Sanctify all you do by the word of God and prayer.

Nor is it enough to keep up, with regularity and seriousness, your usual daily devotions; you must have extraordinary seasons for self-examination, humiliation, and prayer. What is customary is too apt to become coldly formal; hence it is of great consequence to set apart a day or part of a day sometimes, to look into the state of our souls, and to enquire into our ministerial conduct, and occasionally to practise fasting also. I recommend you so to arrange the studies of the week, as to get all your pulpit preparation for the sabbath completed before dinner, or at any rate before tea, on Saturday, so as to have the evening of that day reserved for devotional reading. I have acted pretty much through life, on this plan, and have always felt grieved and disappointed, when by the pressure of engagements in the previous days, I was obliged to devote the Saturday evening hours to sermonising. In summer, I have found at these times, a devotional walk into the country, quite alone, to be refreshing; and I can truly say that

* I would advise you to read a series of papers, on this subject, in the Congregational Magazine, commencing in July, 1843.

these walks, amidst the works and wonders of creation, have been amongst my most solemn seasons of communion with God.

Devotional reading is a powerful auxiliary to ministerial piety. Religious biography is of great service, especially the biography of christian ministers. Perhaps I may mention some which I have found greatly serviceable to myself: Brainerd's life has been a standing book with me, and so has that exquisite gem of biography, Fuller's Memoirs of Pearce; and going further back, that equally precious little volume, Philip Henry's Life, by his son Matthew, Job Orton's Life of Doddridge, that extraordinary book, Payson's Memoirs, Scott, the commentator's Life, by his son, and the Life of Griffin of Portsea, have all been of service to me. How much of sound, practical wisdom, and holy stimulus is to be acquired by conversing with their noble shades! Printed pastoral charges have also yielded me much benefit; especially, and above all of this class, that incomparable and inestimable one by the venerable Abraham Booth, entitled "Pastoral Cautions," which in the early parts of my ministry I read so frequently that I have learnt many portions of it memoriter. I owe more to that small tract, than perhaps to any book, except the Bible. It is the best manual for pastors, for its size, that I am acquainted with. Burnet's Pastoral Care, Baxter's Reformed Pastor, and Bridges on the Christian Ministry, should also be your closet companions, throughout your ministry, but especially at the commencement of it. It is by the aid of such books as these, that the heart is likely to be kept right, while the furniture of the mind is increasing; without which, any knowledge you may acquire

will be only that which puffeth up, without the love that edifies.

I sum up what I have to say in this part of my address, by reminding you that if a young minister would keep up the life of God in his soul, and enjoy the vigour of personal religion, it must be a business, and a great business too, with him to do so. Official piety, that is, an ability and a readiness to preach and pray fluently and evangelically, may be acquired without much trouble, or without any high attainment in spirituality of mind. No minister can live, as a Christian, upon his public services. Praying for, and with his congregation, and preaching and speaking to them, will not be sufficient, of themselves, to keep up the life of religion in his own soul. His own personal piety is a thing apart from his official acts and duties: to employ a most homely illustration, but not an unapt one, servants cannot live upon the act of preparing food for others, but must have their own meals. I once heard that extraordinary man, the late Dr. M'All, of Manchester, say with tears in his eyes, before a large company of his brethren who were then discussing the subject of ministerial difficulty and discouragement, that his greatest difficulty was to keep up the tone of his personal piety to the height of his public exercises, and not play the hypocrite in the pulpit by seeming, as far as his sermons and prayers went, to have more religion than he really possessed. And who has not felt the same, and lamented that the fervour of the preacher in the pulpit, contrasted so sadly with the languor of the closet? All persons are liable to self-deception, but ministers more so perhaps than any others, since we are ever in danger of mistaking our frequent thinking and

speaking of the things of God, for an evidence of true religion in ourselves, and of confounding those gifts which God has bestowed upon us for the benefit of his people, with the fruits of the Spirit, and holy dispositions in our own hearts.

I feel that this address would be deficient in one branch of advice to a young man upon leaving college, and would fail to meet one object of his solicitude, if I did not offer you a few thoughts on the manner of discharging your pastoral duties. Perhaps this department of duty excites, in prospect, more painful apprehension, than even that of the ministry of the word. You are ready to suppose, and you are quite right in making the supposition, that it is less difficult to instruct men than to rule over them, and that the obligations connected with the preacher's pulpit, are far less onerous than those which relate to the pastor's chair. Facts justify your anxiety on this head. Not a few have failed as pastors, who would have succeeded well enough as preachers, had the pulpit been the only sphere of their labour; but having to preside over a church and direct its spiritual affairs, and having exercised no forethought, and taken no pains to prepare themselves by wise considerateness, prudence, and a subdued temper, for the government of the churches committed to their care, they fell into many mistakes at the beginning, and involved at once themselves in difficulties, and their churches in confusion. It has been brought as an objection against our system of church polity that it requires on the one hand, a greater degree of wisdom, meekness, and at the same time of firmness without obstinacy on the part of the pastor; and on the other, more humility and love, on the part of the people, in

order to its working well, than can be looked for in the ordinary circumstances of human nature. But is not this its highest recommendation, and should we not endeavour to bring up human nature to the system of church polity, rather than attempt to bring down the system to the state of human nature? The difficulty of government, however, in churches, which though not in strict propriety of speech, democracies, yet allow the voice of the people in carrying out the law of Christ, is confessedly not small, especially for a young man, who has just come from his retreat and his studies, and certainly requires much of the power of self-government as well as the faculty of governing others. I entirely concur with Mr Booth in the following opinion, contained in the charge to which I have made such pointed reference:

"Notwithstanding the fickleness and caprice of many private professors of religion with regard to their ministers, it has long appeared probable to me, that a majority of those uneasinesses, animosities, and separations, which to the disgrace of religion, take place between pastors and their several churches, may be traced up either to the unchristian tempers, to the gross imprudence, or to the laziness and neglects of the pastors themselves."

I hold this up before you, my young brethren, when you are just entering on your ministerial career, for the purpose of solemn warning, and to impress upon you the idea, that if you fail as pastors, the great probability is that your failure will be the result of your own misconduct. On this chart of the ocean through which your future course is to be directed, I give the friendly indication, "dangerous rocks here, on which many have made shipwreck of their ministerial usefulness, comfort, and respectability." But while in one respect there is something alarming in this view of your peril, there is

in another something encouraging and consolatory, inasmuch as it is more easy to avoid the danger which we ourselves create than that which is created by others. While yet the pastorate is at a little distance, then, and it may be many months before you enter upon its difficulties, prepare for them by wise forethought. Revolve well and much the idea of presiding over a church with the meekness of wisdom, and the calm dignity of one who is anxious to be enabled so to direct its affairs as to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let no idea of self-importance, magisterial authority, or official consequence, much less of autocratic lordliness, enter into your mind. Be impressed with the deep and unspeakable importance of prudence and good temper; of a calm, sedate, serene mind; a cautious, though not timid and fearful, disposition; a meekness not easily ruffled, and a self-possession which, upon perceiving that you have entered upon a wrong course, can step back with dignity, rather than rashly persevere. For all this prepare yourselves, by thoughtful habits and by earnest prayer.

Do not consider the pulpit as the only sphere of your duty, and preaching as your only work. Earnestly as I have enjoined you to endeavour to excel as preachers, I no less earnestly enjoin you not to merge the pastor in the preacher, a fault into which I think some, if not most of us, have fallen in this age. Amidst the stimulating exercises of the pulpit and the platform, in this day of constant excitement and bustling activity, the more retired and quiet, but scarcely less useful, occupations of the catechiser and pastoral visitor, are in danger of being quite forgotten. Study well the meaning of our only and peculiarly expressive deno-

minational apellative, as ministers, I mean the word pastor: strip it of its Latin form, which in part destroys the power of its signification, and look at it in its Saxon dress as shepherd, and go forth with all the duties of this beautiful and tender representation of your office in full view. You are going to shepherd, if I may turn the noun into a verb, the flock, to feed the sheep, and the lambs too. Yes, the lambs. Let them be, as they ever are in the eye and heart of every good and wise shepherd, a considerable object of your official care and attention. Resume the good old-fashioned practice of catechising the children, and unite with this the modern practice of Bible-classes for youth. Realise in your own experience the exquisitely beautiful allusion of Goldsmith, where he represents the children of the parish following with reverent yet familiar affection their minister, "To pluck the good man's gown, and share his smile." Be peculiarly attentive to the young men, especially those who are of the educated class, and endeavour to train them up to be pillars in the church, when their fathers are removed to the temple above. We have neither right nor reason to complain that our young people yield to the seductive influence of the National Establishment, or go off to the world in all its gaieties and pleasures, if we take no pains to cultivate their minds, form their character, and attach them both to ourselves, and to our system. Take a deep interest in the welfare of the Sunday School. It belongs to you of right and propriety to do so: for I maintain that the pastor is the general superintendent of all the public religious instruction that is carried on in connexion with his congregation, and that the Sunday School is one department of his duty. Bestow a kind,

but not a dictatorial, attention upon the teachers, in training and fitting them for their work. Be the friend of your people, and let it be felt by them that you are so; not by convivial feasting, idle gossip, or political discussion, but by watchfulness over their spiritual welfare, gentle yet faithful rebuke, tender sympathy, pastoral visitation, and a deep interest in the religious character of their children. Avoid all undignified familiarity. Respect yourself, and teach every one to respect you. Let no man despise you. Without assuming official pomp, or affecting the odour of extraordinary sanctity, or gathering up yourself into clerical stiffness, or exhibiting religion in the type of awfulness and gloom, remember that a bishop, however young, must be grave and serious: and provided he have these qualities of character, he may be as cheerful and pleasant as sincere religion and good temper can make him. Many young ministers have done themselves irreparable mischief, at their entrance upon their work, by allowing their cheerfulness to degenerate into facetiousness and levity. Never forget that they who see you on week days, will be gathered round your pulpit on the following sabbath, and that your demeanour and conversation in the former, should not hinder, but help them, in profiting by your sermons in the latter. Who can look up with confidence, in reference to their soul's affairs, to the fribble or the fop? Your youth is with some persons a little check to that veneration and deference, with which the christian minister should be regarded; how much is the power of this check increased, when frivolity is associated with juvenility!

I would especially enjoin upon you a devoted attention to the most interesting class in all your charge; I

mean anxious enquirers after salvation. The stricken deer bleeding in the thicket unknown, and therefore unobserved, will require all your tenderness and skill, first to find them out, and then to heal and comfort them. Make it a business, a real, constant business, to find out the individuals that have been interested, impressed, and convinced by your preaching. Not only be accessible to them when they solicit an interview, but draw them out by invitation; have set times and places to meet them; make them feel that you have an ear to hear their enquiries after salvation, and a heart that feels for their solicitude, and yearns over them. Like the Good and the Great Shepherd, gather these lambs in your arms and carry them in your bosom. Be very tender in dealing with them, not to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. The first signs and exercises of the spiritual life are in some cases so feeble and delicate, that too rude and rough a handling may endanger their existence. I have been astonished and grieved sometimes to be informed, that what I intended only as faithfulness, has been mistaken for harshness; and that where I only wished to guard against self-deception, I have administered discouragement. You will find, that to deal faithfully, yet tenderly, with enquirers, is the most difficult part of your work as a teacher; for which you will need a rich fund of experimental religion, and considerable powers of spiritual discrimination.

Study, then, to be the wise, discreet, and vigilant pastor, as well as the impressive, the popular, and useful preacher; for it is the union of both these that constitutes the able minister of the New Covenant.

Permit me to remind you of the momentous im-

portance that will attach to the first two or three years of your ministerial life. This is not sufficiently considered by a great number of those who give themselves up to this high and holy vocation. They leave college with too faint impressions of the tremendous consequence of the work in which they are about to be engaged, and of the necessity of immediately entering upon it with full purpose of heart. They must, they imagine, look about them for awhile, before they get fully into work; they must recover from college fatigue, recreate a little, take it easy, enter gradually upon the toils of office, and form their habits upon lengthened experience and extended observation. Thus does the deceitfulness of the heart impose upon them and lead them to indulge in procrastination. Month after month, perhaps year after year, is whiled away with the mere purpose of beginning soon to get earnestly to work, till desultory habits are formed, and a taste for idleness is acquired. Sometimes such a man's conscience assumes a frowning aspect, and utters language of remonstrance and rebuke; but it is soon appeased and quieted by the promise that when he is married he will settle down into the diligent discharge of the duties of the student and preacher; for till then it is hardly to be expected he should apply very closely. All this while the more observant of his flock perceive a growing poverty of thought in his sermons; they are too far committed to break their connection with the newly-chosen minister, but they contemplate the future with sad but certain presages of discomfort and disquiet. The gloomy vaticinations were too true; marriage ensues, but neither the pastor or the preacher is improved; the congregation diminishes; the stipend lessens; dis-

satisfaction long felt, is at length expressed, and he who would and might have succeeded by diligence and devotedness during the few first years of his ministry, is seen at the end of that time, looking and inquiring after a new situation, which, as his ministerial character has travelled before him, he can find none ready to offer him.

Begin well, my young brethren: set out at once, go forth from this address to-night, revolving the mighty purpose, cherishing the ardent hope, and presenting the fervent prayer, to be able and useful ministers of the New Covenant. It is said, enthusiasts are men of one idea, and heroes men of one design: unite something of both in your souls, and let the one idea and one design with you be to win souls to Christ. When Lord Teignmouth, Governor-General of India, was toiling up the steep ascent of official life, an old gentleman chanced to say, "Make yourself useful, and you will succeed." It became the text on which the young civilian preached many a discourse to others and himself; and by making himself useful he raised himself to what may almost be called the throne of our Eastern Empire. So I say to you, follow what is useful, and you will succeed; and begin at once. What you are found to be as preachers and pastors, at the end of the first two or three years of your ministerial life, that in all probability you will continue to be to the end of it. Begin at once to "make full proof of your ministry," and while in the very novitiate of your office, exhibit yourselves to all who shall behold you, as "workmen that need not be ashamed." You will neither proceed with ease and efficiency, nor end with honour and joy, if you do not begin with diligence and devotedness. Let the

close of the first half-year of your settlement find you men of system, order, punctuality, pursuing with assiduity, regularity, and perseverance, the plans you have laid with wisdom and prayer, for the permanent occupancy of the closet, the study, the pulpit, and the pastor's chair.

I shall now, before I close, advert to a subject of considerable delicacy, and of no less importance, which can be introduced with greater ease and freedom in this printed address, than it could have been in the spoken one; I mean, the selection of a companion for life, and your behaviour in the domestic circle. It is of vast consequence that a young minister should conduct himself with the utmost delicacy in all his intercourse with females, treating with caution and a dignified, though not unnecessarily prudish, reserve, those of them who are unmarried. In making his selection of one with whom to share his lot in earth's pilgrimage, he should exercise the greatest solicitude, and the most careful circumspection, with a conscientious regard to his future usefulness, as well as comfort. It is not enough for him to marry "only in the Lord," since it is not every pious woman who is fit to be the wife of a christian minister. Mr Jay has some judicious remarks, in his "Essay on Marriage," on this subject, of which I shall avail myself.

"It has been commonly said, that no men err so much in this article as ministers. But surely, this cannot be admitted. It cannot be supposed that they who have opportunities to make the best choice, should make the worst; that those whose office it is to inculcate prudence should be proverbial for indiscretion; that those whose incomes are limited, and whose circumstances demand economy, would bring into the management of them those who have been trained up in delicacy and extravagance, and are helpless and pro-

fuse; that men whose office is respectable, and productive of social intercourse, would select vulgarity and ignorance, unfit to be either seen or heard, merely because it is pious. A minister is to inculcate order and regularity; and would he marry a female that would render his house a scene of confusion and tumult? A minister is to shew how the claims of life harmonise, and to assign to the duties of each their own place and season; and would he marry a rattle-brain, who instead of being a keeper at home, has been always rambling after some new preacher; who instead of quietly glorifying God in her proper sphere of action, has been endeavouring to excite public attention; who has been zealous in matters of doubtful disputation, but has treated as beneath her regard, common and relative obligations? He is to recommend neatness and all the decencies of life, and would he marry a slattern? He is to show that the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price, and would he marry a scold? He is to stand in the same relation to all his people, and would he marry a female who would fondly attach herself to a few cronies, listen to all their secrets, and divulge her own, and form cabals and schisms which will render his residence unpleasant, or occasion his removal?"

These remarks are as wise as they are pointed and pithy. Be circumspect, then, in all your conduct in forming this union. Many young ministers, by suffering themselves to be hastily and incautiously entangled, have either gone forward to the ruin of their comfort and usefulness, or have broken their promises to the destruction of their character. Let there be no trifling with female affection: no pointed and significant attentions, to be terminated by sudden and dishonourable withdrawals. And when you have entered into this relationship and shall be at the head of a family, conduct yourselves towards the woman of your choice, and to your household, with becoming propriety. "It cannot reasonably be doubted," says Mr Booth, in the charge so often referred to already, "that many a devout and amiable woman has given her hand to a minister of the gospel in preference to a private Christian, though

otherwise equally deserving, in sanguine expectation in so doing, of enjoying peculiar spiritual advantages in the matrimonial relation. But, alas! there is much reason to apprehend that not a few among these worthy females have often reflected to the following effect:

"I have indeed married a preacher of the gospel, but I do not find in him the affectionate domestic instructor for either myself or my children. My husband is much esteemed among his religious acquaintance as a respectable christian character, but his example at home is far from being delightful. Affable, pleasing, and condescending in the parlours of his religious friends; but frequently either trifling or unsavoury, or imperious and unsocial in his own family. Preferring the opportunity of being entertained at a plentiful table, and of conversing with the wealthy, the polite, and the sprightly, to the homely fare of his own family, and the company of his wife and children, he often spends his afternoons and evenings from home until so late an hour, that domestic worship is either omitted, or performed in a hasty and slovenly manner, with scarcely the appearance of devotion. Little caring for my soul, or for the management of our growing offspring, he seems concerned for scarcely any thing more than keeping fair with his people; relative to which, I have often calmly remonstrated, and submissively entreated, but all in vain. Surrounded with little ones, and attended with straits; destitute of the sympathies, the instructions, and the consolations which might have been expected from the affectionate heart of a pious husband, connected with the gifts of an evangelical minister, I pour out my soul to God, and mourn in secret.'"

Affecting picture of the interior of many a minister's habitation, both in and out of the established church! May it never be realised, my brethren, in yours; on the contrary, whenever it shall please Him who setteth the solitary in families, to place you at the head of a household of your own, may you in all the tender offices of connubial life, exhibit a bright pattern of every social excellence, and a beautiful specimen of domestic government.

If anything need be added to enforce all I have said,

I would suggest to you the circumstances of the times in which you are going forth into the church of Christ, and stepping upon the world's great theatre of action. Man's life, and of course the ministerial office and character also, have derived new importance from the eventful age in which we of this generation are destined to exist.

"There are times," says Mr Hall, "in which the moral world seems to stand still; there are others when it seems impelled towards its goal with accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting perhaps than any which has been known in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken so fast upon us, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, that it looks as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close."

It is not, however, so much the world as the church, that is now being shaken. Enemies to pure and simple Christianity who we imagined had grown old and effete, are renewing their youth; controversies which we supposed had been well nigh settled, are revived with all the fierceness of theological warfare; and elements of mischief which we concluded had become extinct, are now threatening us with a general conflagration. The moral and religious, as well as the political, horizon appears strange, unquiet, and portentous. On the one hand we see education, knowledge, civil liberty, and evangelical religion, going forth to conquer the evils of society and bless mankind; on the other we behold a spirit of delusion rising up and making mighty efforts and rapid strides, to arrest the progress, and roll back the tide, of improvement, to undo the work of the Reformation, to ruin the cause for which patriots bled in the field and martyrs suffered at the stake, and to extinguish the light of evangelical religion amidst the thick darkness of Papal

superstition: while notwithstanding, we behold the march of discovery, commerce, and war, opening all nations to the missionary spirit, which is advancing to cover them with the blessings of Christianity, and to bring on the millennial reign of the Son of God.

What men ought you to be, or at any rate strive to be, if you would be worthy of such an age: how grave, serious, and reflective! How receptive should you be of each potent influence as it passes over you: how expansive to grasp the various objects presented to your moral sympathies; and how impulsive in communicating whatever power you possess, in aid of the great movements going on around you. How should you labour by deep thoughtfulness, fervent piety, and high communings with the Infinite Mind of the Great Governor of the universe, to prepare yourselves for your parts in the field of action. To be ciphers at any time, and under any circumstances would be humbling enough, but to be insignificant at such a crisis in the world's history as this, is the very depth of degradation: may this humiliation not be yours.

Go then, my beloved young brethren, in humbleness of mind, yet in the confidence of faith, and occupy the spheres of labour and of usefulness that are opening before you; go and reward the care bestowed upon your education by your invaluable Tutors; go and fulfil the expectations that have been excited by your talents and acquirements; go and recommend to public confidence and support, by your ministerial excellence, the Institution where it has been acquired; go and preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God, convert sinners, feed the church which Christ has purchased with his own

blood, and win triumphs for the Lord of life and glory. May a long, useful, and honourable career be allotted to each of you, but if it be otherwise detemined, and you should early descend from the pulpit to the grave, only be faithful unto death, and then, although neither the martyr's nor the veteran's crown shall be yours, yet shall it still be a crown of life, which, as the hand of your divine Lord shall place it with approving smile upon your brow, shall be accompanied with that enrapturing testimony, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

LETTERS TO MINISTERS AND STUDENTS FOR THE MINISTRY,

AS TO THEIR OWN PERSONAL RELIGION, IN CONNEXION WITH A GENERAL REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

From the Evangelical Magazine, for 1829.

ON THE NECESSITY OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN THE HEARTS OF MINISTERS, AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A REVIVAL IN CHURCHES.

My dear Brethren,

I HAVE had my attention much drawn of late, by the remarks of my brethren, to the subject of a revival of religion in our churches in this country; and although I do not think we have any ground to expect the blessing quite to the same extent in which it is enjoyed on the other side of the Atlantic, yet I entirely agree with those who have already written on this topic, that there is no reason why we might not have, and why we ought not to have, more of it than we at present possess. I say, ought not to have; for it is a radical error to suppose that a revival in religion is merely a privilege. It is obviously the duty of sinners to believe the gospel, and of believers to have more faith and holiness than they already possess. A revival, therefore, which means an increase in the number and piety of the righteous, is our duty; and it is our sin if we have it not. True it is, that the work can be produced only by the influence of the Holy Spirit; but this is no excuse for the unbelief of some, and the dulness of others. God has promised his Spirit to them that ask it; and if we have it not, it is because we either do not ask it, or ask it amiss.

I quite agree with most that has been said on the

steps to be taken to obtain the necessary effusion of the Holy Ghost; but there is one thing which has not obtained that prominence in order of means which I think should be given to it, I mean, the revival of religion in the hearts of ministers. Permit me, then, my dear brethren, to address these few remarks to your candid and most serious attention. I am not going to accuse you as a witness, or to condemn you as a judge, but to expostulate with you, and that with the tenderest affection, as a brother. In thus attempting to remove the mote from your eye, I do not forget that there is one in my own, and I shall be truly thankful to the humblest of your number if he will extract it. Receive, then, in love, what is offered in meekness.

If there be a revival in religion in this country, where must it be expected to begin? Who may be supposed to be first partakers of it? The ministers of religion themselves. As the sunbeams strike first upon the mountains, and as the clouds pour forth their treasures first upon the hills, which often form a kind of natural reservoir for the valleys; so may it be looked for, that the spiritual rain will descend first upon the pulpit, before it reaches the pew. The influence of ministers upon their flocks is very great, both for good or evil. "Like priest, like people," is a proverb, which, as in the case of most other proverbs, is founded upon truth. We are in the midst of our people, like central fires producing a glowing atmosphere around us, or like icebergs which chill every thing in their vicinity. If we are eminently spiritual and devotional, the influence of this will be felt by our people, both in our public exercises and our private intercourse. Our prayers and sermons in the house of God, and our conversation in

the parlour, will all tend to keep up the power of godliness in the hearts of our flocks. But if we are secular, lukewarm, and trifling, the same spirit may be looked for in them. Should a revival take place among them, and not extend to us, we shall not only stop its progress, but shall undo what has been done; but if our piety be increased, the influence of it will, in all probability, be spread through the church.

A question, however, will here very naturally present itself; Does our religion need to be revived? I am decidedly of opinion that it does. Whatever may be the cause of it, I am myself fully and painfully convinced, that the great bulk of the present race of ministers are by no means distinguished for the more spiritual and elevated exercises of religion. I think we fall very far short in what may be called devotional habits, in spirituality of mind, in communion with God, in self-converse and examination. It is true, we are active in what concerns the diffusion of religion, and much time and labour is spent in public matters, a circumstance which probably, in the estimation of some, will furnish at once a cause and an excuse for a deficiency in other matters; but as to our stature in respect to personal religion, strictly and properly so called, we are pigmies compared with the men of other times, or with some men of our own times. Let us only read the Memoirs of Philip and Matthew Henry, Halyburton, Doddridge, Pearce, Brainerd, Henry Martyn, and Fletcher; and compare ourselves with them, to see how dwarfish is our piety. But, with great deference, I would suggest a few particulars of inquiry.

1. What is the state of closet devotion among us? Do we spend much time in reading the Scriptures, not

as critics, but as Christians, anxiously desirous of drinking into the very spirit of the word of God? Do we spend hours, or even an hour, every day, in that breathing, panting, wrestling after God, which characterised, if we may judge from their diaries, the ministers of a bygone age? Have we our seasons of extraordinary devotion; our days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, as they had? Or do we not content ourselves too much with a bustling out of door religion, the religion of committee rooms, and of public meetings, and of fraternal associations? Perhaps we satisfy ourselves, and quiet our consciences, with the excuse, that there is so much now to draw a man away from his closet, that it is neither expected nor required of him, that he should be so much in it, as were the men of a more quiet age. This, however, can be no valid excuse, unless we are prepared to say, that already the sun often rises, and the evening star goes down upon our devotions. Indeed, my dear brethren, the fire of devotion does not burn with that intensity upon the altar of our hearts, which is necessary to form the central flame from which a whole church should be ever receiving a renewed warmth and glow of holy feeling. We abridge our devotions, to enlarge our opportunities for more public services. We diminish that one exercise, which, of all those that employ our time, calls for increase. Let us only look around, and see how many engagements we can better spare than a moment of our prayers. We had better give up our periodical literature, the daily journal, yea, almost anything, than take a portion from those seasons which are devoted to draw down from heaven, by fervent supplication, the supplies we need both for ourselves and our churches.

2. In our families, are we, up to the full extent of the terms, the men of God, the ministers of Christ, the prophets of the Lord, whose business it is always, and everywhere, to teach both by our words and actions? We should be domestic ministers, teachers, and expounders of the Word of God; the pastors of the church in our own houses, looking well after the souls of wives, children, and servants; breathing the spirit of devotion through our habitations; and not the mere ex-officio chaplains of our families, maintaining the forms of domestic devotion, but without their power. A minister's house should be the element of piety, the vestibule of heaven.

3. How do we act and appear in the houses of our friends? Are we the mere clerical guest at the well spread table, the cheerful companion, the enlivener of the circle, the source of hilarity, the retailer of anecdotes and news; or do we preach from house to house, not ceasing to diffuse the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place? Often and often has my own conscience smote me, on returning from a Christian party, to recollect how little I have done to edify and instruct my friends, by giving a profitable turn to the conversation, by expounding the Scriptures, or by engaging the circle in acts of earnest prayer. In this department of our work, I am confident, we are lamentably deficient. We are too much mere men of the parlour; and patronize, by our example, the waste of time, in that mere idle, empty, unprofitable gossip, which is the current intercourse of most parties. We seem to act as if our work were to be done exclusively in the pulpit. If religion be revived in the church, it must be revived in the house; and if it spread with greater

vigour round the greater circle of the vestry, it must be nourished with greater care in the smaller circle in the drawing-room; and, if this be done at all, it must be done, so far as instrumentality is concerned, by us.

And then, in addition to the anxiety which we should feel to introduce the subject of personal godliness in those circles which are gathered by the invitations and courtesies of friendly intercourse, we should also appoint special meetings of select classes of our members, to examine into the state of their souls, and to promote their spiritual welfare by every means which a holy ingenuity can devise.

4. Are we spiritual and devotional in our public services? Are our sermons the fruits of our experience, as well as of our studies? We should lay before our flocks that which we ourselves have tasted and handled of the Word of God, and never preach to others that which we have not first preached to ourselves. Perhaps the sermons of the present day exhibit, in different men, the opposite extremes of carelessness and elaboration. Discourses full of thought, yet at the same time characterised by fervour, simplicity, and spirituality, which, though the effect of deep study, are no less the product of intense piety, are too rare. If we take pains, it is too often merely to shine: our motives are often corrupt; we preach ourselves, or preach Christ from selfish considerations; and this is too obvious to be concealed from many of our more spiritual and penetrating hearers. We look for tokens of approbation, expressions of admiration, and are, perhaps, seen to be disappointed and sad, if we do not receive them; and seem to feel as if we had preached in vain, if we do

not hear the language of applause. I do not say that this is the case with all, or with any of us always; but it is too much the case with many of us, and must exceedingly grieve the Spirit of God. Religion must be in a very low state in our souls, where there is much of this self-seeking.

And, probably, we are deficient in the devotional parts of our public services. Our prayers are not characterised by that solemnity, spirituality, and earnestness, which are essential to the cultivation of devotional feelings in the people. A minister's prayers do more, perhaps, to keep up the spirituality of his people, than his sermons; that is, when they are of an intense and elevated character. I have known ministers so endowed with the gift and the grace of prayer, that their public supplications and intercessions seemed, as with a sweet and holy violence, to bear their congregations away with them to the throne of God. But this is not often the case. Dull formality, wearisome sameness, careless indifference, too often, and too generally, characterise our public devotions. We act as if the prayer were nothing, and the sermon everything; and come down too nearly to the level of the slovenly, irreverend, and inefficient manner in which the Liturgy of the Church of England is read by a large proportion of her clergy. I ask no other proof that we, as ministers, need a revival of our own personal religion, than the character of our public prayers.

5. Perhaps this is evident, also, from our intercourse with each other at the times of our public services, or in our more retired and select social circles. Is there not far too much of light and frivolous conversation, of

trifling jests, of ludicrous anecdote, of noisy hilarity? I am not an enemy to cheerfulness, nor an advocate for gloom and grimace. I am myself too prone to mirth. But then, we bear a high and sacred character; our vocation is religion, our great business is salvation, our labour for immortality; we are, if the term may be applied to the ordinary ministers of the Gospel, the ambassadors of Christ, and we should be consistent, and maintain that dignity and seriousness which become our office. Happily for the reputation of the Dissenting ministry, our intercourse is ever distinguished by the strictest regard to sobriety, and temperance, and purity of speech. Negative propriety of the highest order is ever observed by us. Our deficiency lies in what I have so frequently spoken of under the name of spirituality. There is not enough of mutual edification, of mutual excitement to deeds of piety and zeal, of earnest prayer, of conversation upon the difficulties and encouragements of our office. We entertain each other as men and brethren; but do we improve each other as Christians and as ministers? How often do we leave each other's society, after having spent hours together, without being conscious of having given or received a single hint that was calculated to produce one devout feeling!

Now, my dear brethren, are these things so or are they even partially so? Do let us examine ourselves. The writer includes himself in all that he has written; and he can truly say that he is far more conscious of his own defects than he is of those of his brethren; and is sorrowfully convinced that no one more needs to be called upon to seek a revival of religion than himself. I want to see in us all, a return of the pious spirit of the

Puritans and the Nonconformists; but, alas! such is human nature, there is no obtaining their elevated devotion perhaps but by being plunged into their sufferings. But how far behind it was the piety of Doddridge, Fletcher, Brainerd, Pearce and Martyn? And yet they lived not in the days of persecution. Let us peruse again and again their Memoirs, till we have caught their spirit. Let us not only read their works, and follow them through their public careers of labour and success; but let us steal into their closets, and behold their wrestlings with God, their self-communings, their intercourse with heaven, their tears of contrition, their acts of humiliation, their seasons of fasting and prayer. O, to be like them! for, I am afraid that many of us are not like them. Our piety is feeble and uninfluential; it has little of their profound humiliation, little of their height of exalted devotion, little of their strength of self-denial. Let us, then, seek to have it invigorated and improved. We have called, or may yet call, the attention of our flocks to the subject of a revival; we have preached, or may preach, on the necessity of more religion among us; we may hold prayer meetings, and spend days of humiliation; we may call to united supplication for the out-pouring of the Spirit; all this is well, but we must go further; for if this be all we do, the stir which has been awakened will soon cease, and all things will relapse into their former state. We must begin with our own souls; we must seek, first, the revival of our own religion; we must exhibit to our people the example of a state of piety renewed and invigorated. Of a revival of religion in our churches, it may be said, "This kind goeth not forth, but by fasting and prayer

on our part." The impulse must be given by us, and not by words only, but by our example.

Is it, then, desirable that the piety of the present age should be improved? Can you doubt it? I know very well that there is much of profession in this day; I believe that a certain kind of religion is upon the increase; and I am aware that the public spirit of the present day is a proof that there must be much true piety in existence and in operation. But is the prevailing religion of a strong, and healthful, and vigorous kind? Is it characterised by depth and fervour; by humility and love; by the mortification of our corrupt affections; by devotional habits; by self-improvement? No. It is the hasty growth of seed upon stony ground. It is of infinite consequence, that while religion is really spreading, it should be of a good kind, strong, and vigorous, and fruitful. We are sending our piety abroad, and we should be careful to send that which is of the best kind, in the hearts of our Missionaries, who otherwise, of course will be, in general, of the average standard of that which exists amongst us. All our operations at home, as well as all our exertions for diffusing religion abroad, are also influenced by the kind of religion which prevails; our village preachers, our tract distributors, our Sunday-school teachers, our masters and mistresses of boarding schools, our parents, our heads of commercial and manufacturing establishments, all would feel and show the influence of a revived state of religion; for they cannot be expected to be active, while their own souls are lukewarm; or if they do anything in the way of circulating religion, they will circulate only a poor, feeble, and heartless kind of piety.

Suffer me, then, my dear brethren, to exhort you, as you feel the importance of having the spiritual state of your churches, and the cause of Evangelical piety generally, revived, that you would inquire whether this glorious and much to be desired work must not begin with us, who are ministers of the word; and, if so, whether we should not immediately and most earnestly apply ourselves to the business?

On us it depends, under God, whether the present happy stir and inquiry shall go on to a decided increase of true religion, or whether it shall die away and expire after a little transient excitement. We are come to a crisis in the religious history of our churches, and it is for us to say how it shall determine. Our responsibility, always tremendous, is now most awful. Everything is calculated to alarm us, if we do not awake from our sleep, and throw off our sloth. Let us begin afresh to live for God, and to commune with him. A fire is kindled, and let us each bring a coal from the altar on which it burns to our own hearts, and carry back fresh fuel to the central flame. O, what preachers shall we be, if we preach from the full rich experience of a renewed and revived piety. An earnestness and freshness will be imparted to our public services; and this, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, will clothe them with new power, and invest them with new attraction. Peculiar seasons for prayer have been so often recommended, that I may venture without censurable egotism, to say, that a portion of every Saturday morning has long been appropriated by me to implore the influence of the Spirit upon the ministers of all denominations.

If, dear brethren, I have said anything to offend, forgive me; for it is far from my intention to injure the feelings of those whom I so much love as my fellow-labourers in the vineyard of Christ.

Commending you to God, and to the mind and spirit of his grace,

I remain,
Your affectionate Brother,
J. A. J.

AN ADDRESS TO THOSE WHO ARE ENGAGED IN PREPARATORY STUDIES FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, ON PERSONAL RELIGION.

My dear young Brethren,

It will appear, perhaps, to some, an act of presumption in me thus to offer advice to those who are enjoying the rich and precious advantages afforded by our academical institutions. If an apology for this obtrusion be due, either to you, or to the able and excellent men at whose feet it is your privilege to be brought up for the good work to which God has called you, I will plead the deep solicitude which I feel, both for your own usefulness, and the welfare of the churches hereafter to be committed to your care.

You are fully informed of the great attention which has been lately paid in this country, to the subject of revivals of religion; you know how much has been said and written on this important and interesting topic; and you have, no doubt, participated in the deep anxiety of your senior brethren and fathers, to witness a greater effusion of Divine influence on this part of Christ's vineyard. It cannot surely have escaped your notice, how closely connected you stand with such a happy state of things, and how powerfully influential you may be, under the Divine blessing, in bringing it about. If the largest share of responsibility belongs to those who are already the pastors of our

churches, the next in amount lies upon those who are so soon to enter upon the work of the ministry. Your situation, my brethren, is next to ours in tremendous importance.

"Our fathers, where are they?" The same question will soon be asked by you, in reference to those of us who are now passing the meridian of life; and in a very few years you will be seen bearing the heat and burden of the day. You are the rising race who, with some exceptions, will be the ministers of the word, and the pastors of the churches, in the next generation. In a a very few months, or years, you will be found taking the oversight of immortal souls, and watching and feeding the flocks which the Lord has purchased with his own blood. Is it not, then, of unspeakable importance, that you should make the inquiry whether this general concern about a revival of religion has found its way into our Colleges?

Does not the state of personal religion among our students need improvement? I cast no reflection, I prefer no accusation, I institute no invidious comparison, when I express my conviction that the fruits of the Spirit and of righteousness are not found in such abundance as could be wished, or might be expected, in our academic groves. I have dwelt myself for a season in such a situation, and look back with something of grief and shame upon that portion of my life, as being behind many other parts of it in fervour of devotion and spirituality of mind. Perhaps many others can testify that they brought away less of simple, living, earnest piety from a college, than they carried to it; that they declined in religion as they grew in knowledge; and lost, even amidst the pursuit of Biblical

learning, the ethereal spirit of a living faith. This does not, in any degree, diminish the necessity, or the value, of academic preparation for the ministry; but merely shows that through a want of watchfulness it has, in some cases, proved the occasion, though certainly not the cause, of an attendant evil. Perhaps, my dear brethren, your own experience bears, at this moment, solemn and affecting testimony to the truth of these remarks; perhaps you are almost involuntarily led to say "Oh! give me back the deep sense of eternal realities I once possessed; the genuine contrition, the lively faith, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the ardent zeal, I once experienced, under the influence of which I offered up myself a whole burnt sacrifice unto God; and I will most cheerfully resign all the literature and science which I have gained; and feel myself not only the holier and happier for the exchange, but more fitted for the great work of beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God."

I wish you, however, to distinguish between the abuse and the necessary influence of academical pursuits. Literature, as a general rule, is an indispensable qualification for the ministerial office; and the acquisition of it, though attended with some degree of danger to the life of faith, may, by prayer and caution, be accomplished, and has been accomplished in innumerable cases, without any detriment to the power of godliness in the soul. If, indeed, it were a thing impossible, to acquire the knowledge of languages, of metaphysics, and of science, without the loss, or even the serious diminution, of personal religion, it might become a question, whether an unlearned but pious ministry would not be more likely to answer all the

ends for which a divine revelation is granted to man, more effectually than a race of scholars or philosophers, destitute of experimental piety. I am, however, relieved from the discussion of that question, by the perfect conviction that there is no real opposition between literary attainments and a high state of personal religion; and that any diminution in holy affections which may have taken place during the progress of academic engagements, is to be traced up to the sinful negligence of those, by whom those necessary pursuits are conducted.

I will concede that there is, both in the nature of your literary studies themselves, and in the degree of application which must be paid to them in order to improve, something which, without great watchfulness, may prove injurious to piety. The filthiness of Grecian mythology may pollute the imagination; the study of systematic theology and Biblical criticism may produce an irreverend familiarity with divine truth, and deaden your spiritual affections; the intense application of the mind may leave the faculties in such a state of exhaustion, as to unfit them for meditation, prayer, and communion with God, when the season of retirement comes round. But, perhaps, these matters are not more injurious to personal religion, than the occupations of the tradesman or of the artizan, surrounded and engaged as they are with men whose example and conversation are replete with moral contagion. In our present probationary state, religion will find difficulties to surmount, and enemies to conquer, in every situation.

Rejecting, then, the nature of your occupation, as an excuse for the neglect or injury of your pious habits, let

me ask you, my young friends, what is the present state and degree of your personal religion?

1. What measure of holy affection and heavenly mindedness do you possess? Are you in those respects what you once were? Have you the same vivid perception and powerful apprehension of spiritual things as you once had? Is your penitence as deep, your faith as steady, your joy as lively, your hope as strong, your love as fervent, as they once were? Do you feel as well as know? Does crucifixion with Christ, a sense of the value of the Saviour, deadness to the world, aspiration after heaven, delighting in God, retain in your eyes the importance they once had? Or, do you begin to think that the student may throw off something of the simple earnestness of the young Christian? Are you aware of anything like a growing persuasion in your heart, or an approach to it, that he who holds daily communion with Euclid and Newton in the lofty abstractions of mathematics; with Homer and Virgil, in the bright creations of poetry; or with Cicero and Demosthenes, in the inspirations of eloquence; needs not converse so much with David, in the strains of devotion; with Isaiah, in the raptures of prophecy; or with Paul, in the experience of Christian doctrine? Ah! my young brethren, I can tell you, that the longer a Christian minister lives, the older he gets, and the richer he becomes in knowledge, the more does he feel anxious to revive the ardour and recover the simplicity of his first love to the Saviour of his soul. We wish to combine with our present more matured knowledge, the freshness of our former views and feelings as young converts. Nothing can be more dangerous in itself,

nothing more fatal to your character and usefulness, as a minister of the Gospel, than an idea, that religious affections are not so necessary for you, as for the private Christian, for the young convert, or the illiterate professor. If your pious habits are relaxing, you are in danger; and this danger is greatly increased, if you are attempting to justify such a state of mind as this.

2. Is private prayer maintained with constancy, punctuality, and enjoyment? or, are you allowing your studies to encroach upon the time formerly allotted to this holy and necessary exercise; and sinking into mere short, lifeless forms of devotion? Time was, when you felt that you could as soon live without bread, as without prayer. It was your practice, and your delight, to enter your closet, and to commune with your Father who sees in secret. Is it so now? or is the spirit of devotion fled? Are you not often reading Homer or Demosthenes, when you should be perusing Moses, David, or Paul; and meditating upon some heathen fiction, when you should be contemplating the glory of Christ, and worshipping at the footstool of Jehovah? Studies that are unsanctified by devotion, are likely to do you little good; and knowledge, gained at the expense of prayer, will only puff you up.

3. Is your conscience so tender, as to be easily wounded by little sins, and to produce alarm at the least appearance of evil? or, are you becoming more tolerant of sin, and more easy and accommodating in your views of what is wrong? Perhaps your enlarged intercourse with society is leading you to abate somewhat of your unnecessary scrupulosity, your rigid stiffness, and offensive unsocial austerity, as you now begin to call your former noble consistency and separation from

the world. Has your cheerfulness degenerated into levity; your neatness into foppery; your politeness into beauish frivolity? Can you now flatter and pay hollow compliments, flirt with females, quarrel with politicians, or throw away your precious time upon novels and worthless poetry, which can neither elevate the imagination nor purify the heart? I do not charge you with these things; but only ask if there be anything like them, or approaching to them?

4. Is the Word of God read by you with such devotional feeling as it formerly was, or do you take it up, merely as a book containing the science which is the subject of your studies; or as a collection of texts, from which you are to select one for a sermon? That man's religion is in a bad state, who ceases to read the Bible as a Christian, although he may spend hours a day over it as a mere matter of study.

5. When you hear a sermon, and join in public or family ordinances of religion, is it with any degree of hallowed emotion and personal interest as a Christian, or only with the cold stiffness or formality, or the captious inquisitiveness of the critic? At the Lord's Supper, do you melt and glow beneath redeeming love as formerly, or is all motionless and cold as the marble statue?

6. In your feelings towards your fellow students, have you that charity which "is not easily provoked; which is kind; which envieth not; which seeketh not her own; which vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth?" Can you look without ill-will upon superior talents, and hear without emotions of resentment of superior popularity? And, on the other hand, do you

conduct yourselves with kind and amiable affability towards men of inferior abilities, and strive with kind assiduity to make them feel as little as possible their inferiority?

7. What is the state of your heart, as respects your public exercises in preaching and prayer. Is it your chief aim to be popular, or (amidst some mixture of that vanity, from which the holiest are not altogether free,) is it your supreme object to glorify God in the salvation of immortal souls? Is your energy the offspring of pure zeal, or of a thirst after applause? Are you guided in the selection of your subjects, and in the method of discussing them, by a sincere desire to make men wise unto salvation, or to shine as an ingenious, profound, or original thinker? Is your feeling the genuine, unforced emotion of the heart, or the mere warmth enkindled by the sight of a listening audience, and a wish to produce effect? Do you go to the pulpit with a sense of awful responsibility; a conviction of the tremendous import and eternal consequences of your message; an intense anxiety to commend yourselves, by a manifestation of the truth, to every man's conscience in the sight of God, or with a light, careless flippancy of manners, as if you were going to rehearse a lesson and act a part?

Now, my dear brethren, examine your hearts and your conduct in all these particulars, and ascertain the state of your personal religion. Vital and experimental piety is the first and most essential qualification for the ministerial office. It is the base of the pyramid, compared with which, learning and science, however important they are considered, and justly considered, are but as the higher part of the structure, or the

gilded ornament at the top. I will refer you to no mean authority for opinions on the close connexion between ministerial piety and ministerial usefulness. The venerable Abraham Booth, in his charge to Mr Hopkins, has the following striking remarks:

"In proportion as the principles of true piety are vigorous in your heart, may you be expected to fill up the wide circumference of pastoral duty. For there is no reason to fear that a minister, if tolerably furnished with gifts, will be remarkably deficient, or negligent, in any known branch of pastoral obligation, while his heart is alive to the enjoyments and to the duties of the Christian character. It is from a pastor's defects, considered under the notion of a disciple, that his principal difficulties and chief dangers arise. For, my brother, it is only on the permanent basis of genuine Christian piety, that your pastoral character can be established, or appear with respectability, in the light of the New Testament. I call genuine Christian piety permanent, because everything essential to it will abide and flourish in immortal vigour; whereas, the pastoral office, though honourable and important when connected with true godliness, must soon be laid aside, as inconsistent with the heavenly state. 'He that would go down to the pit in peace,' says Dr. Owen, 'let him keep up duties in his family and closet; let him hear as often as he can have opportunity; let him speak often of good things; let him leave the company of profane and ignorant men, until he have obtained a good repute for religion; let him preach and labour to make others better than he is himself; and, in the mean time, not neglect to humble his heart to walk with God in a manifest holiness and usefulness; and he will not fail of his end.'"

And to the remarks of this aged and eminent servant of Christ, may be added those of a man whose sermons contain, in the highest degree of perfection that I am acquainted with, the union of chaste diction, profound eloquence, and fervent piety.

"Men," says Mr Hall, "are ruined in their eternal interests, by failing to look within; by being so absorbed in the pursuits of external good, as to neglect the state of their hearts. But can this be supposed to be the case with us, who must never hope to discharge

our office with effect, without an intimate acquaintance with the inward man, without tracing the secret operations of nature and grace, without closely inspecting the causes of revival and of decay in the spiritual life, and detecting the most secret springs and subtle artifices of temptation: in all which we shall be successful, just in proportion to the degree of devout attention we bestow on the movements of our own minds? Where can we turn, without meeting incentives to piety? What part of the sacred function can we touch, which will not remind us of the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, and the emptiness of all sublunary good; or where we shall not find ourselves in a temple, resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations?'"

I know not two treatises so well deserving your serious perusal, as the "Pastoral Cautions" of Mr Booth, and Mr Hall's sermon "On the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Ministry."

The state of your personal religion is not only of importance to you in your present situation, but also to your future character and usefulness. The ministerial character is formed at college. If the student be a lukewarm Christian, so will the pastor be; if the former be wholly taken up in the pursuits of the scholar, the philosopher, or the critic, to the almost entire neglect of vital and experimental religion, the latter will, in all probability, exhibit the same destitution of the first qualification for the pastoral office. I do not undervalue learning; I rate its worth at a very high price; I regret that I have been prevented, by circumstances, from making larger acquisitions as a scholar; I wish to see a far greater portion of literature possessed by the Dissenting ministry; and for this purpose I would have the term of academic study still more lengthened: but with all these admissions, I say, that it is surprising how slightly and indirectly the Christian pastor finds the profoundest scholarship and philosophy to bear

upon the spiritual and eternal interests of his flock, compared with earnest and experimental religion. Should you, unhappily, go forth, with but a low degree of fervent piety, to the future scene of your ministerial labours, you will be most miserably qualified to take the oversight of immortal souls, however profound or elegant may be the acquisitions which you may have made. What is the cause why so many inefficient ministers are found among us? Intellectual incompetency will account for it in part. The door of admission to the college has been opened too wide; too low a standard of mental ability has been set up; and hence many have been admitted, whose piety, sincere and even ardent as it is, should not have been considered as sufficient qualification for an office, the design of which is to feed the souls of men with knowledge and understanding. But, in many other cases, there is no lack of either natural ability or acquired learning, and yet the pastor and the people are asleep together over the interests of Zion. In these instances, it is evident the defect is a want of fervent and vigorous religion in him, whose heart, according to its own spiritual temperature, raises or depresses that of the church committed to his care. And if the history of such pastors be traced back to their college days, it will generally be found, that such men are, as ministers, what they were as students.

If, then, it be of any importance that you should be partakers of a high degree of personal religion hereafter, you should seek to possess it now: and it is a matter worth inquiring into, whether there needs not a revival of the interests of piety in your hearts. In America, the revivals of which we have heard so much have, in several instances, commenced in the colleges. Will

you, then, my dear brethren, permit me to urge on you very serious attention to this subject; and, at the same time, a few hints in reference to the steps which should be taken by you.

1. Let each student devote a special season to self-examination and humiliation before God apart by himself. Let him review his whole religious history as a Christian, calling to recollection his views and feelings when he first became a disciple of Christ; and then compare with them his present religious state. Let him take a devout and comprehensive view of the great work to which he has devoted his life, and for which he is preparing himself. Then let him inquire into his motives, his aims, his spiritual qualifications. To assist him in this business, I recommend most earnestly the devout perusal of Baxter's "Reformed Pastor," which will open to him the nature and obligations of the office to which he is looking forward. I know not the uninspired composition, which is so searching, so humbling, so stimulating, as this transcendent treatise.

2. It would be advisable for students to unite in small parties for the same purpose, selecting their more intimate friends, to spend together a season of prayer and humiliation. And this should be followed by an association of the whole body in a general act of confession, abasement, and supplication. And if this last were attended with fasting, it would be still more solemn and impressive.

3. But after such seasons have passed away, much remains to be done, to perpetuate the benefit they have produced. Take up, my dear young brethren, the idea, and let it root itself in your hearts as one of your

deepest and strongest convictions, that piety is your most essential and durable qualification for the pastoral office. Whatever else you give your attention to, this ought not to be, must not be, neglected. Let it be the first object of your solicitude and of your pursuit. Occasionally observe special seasons of examination and humiliation. Let nothing induce you to encroach upon the time devoted to private prayer. If your studies are unusually pressing, rather take time to carry them on from sleep, than from prayer. If there happen to be in the college, young men of unusual cheerfulness amounting to levity, make them not your associates, lest you imitate their example; but in a spirit of humility and affectionate fidelity, set before them the impropriety of their conduct and the contagious influence of their example. One such disposition has oftentimes done immense mischief to nearly the whole body. In your intercourse with each other, be cautious not to make the subject of religion a matter of jocular and undevout conversation; nor allow the topics of your own sermons to become the theme of mere critical or frivolous remark. Such a practice must inevitably extinguish the fervour of religious affections, and produce criminal lukewarmness. In your recreations, for recreations you must have, (if indeed, you are students in reality,) avoid all noisy, obstreperous, and frivolous mirth. I am no enemy to chaste and well-tempered cheerfulness, nor do I wish to see our colleges converted into monasteries of the order of La Trappe, where the melancholy inmates move about in spectral gloom and silence. Levity, however, is, on the other hand, exceedingly mischievous. In your attendance upon domestic and public worship, it is of great conse-

quence to endeavour to preserve a devotional spirit; and it will greatly conduce to keep up the vigour of holy affections, if you always are in course of perusal of some volume of religious biography, or some treatise of experimental religion. Especially is it of immense consequence to maintain a habit of reading the Scriptures devotionally. I know not a direction of more consequence to you than this. It is our danger as ministers, no less than yours as students, to read the Bible only as theologians, critics, and preachers. We are prone, as soon as we open the sacred volume, to systematize as divines, to take up texts as the weapons of controversy, to analyze the meaning of words and phrases as etymologists and expositors, or to select and arrange passages as preachers; when we ought to be reading exclusively for the joys of faith, the glow of love, and the aspirations of hope. Like a physician, examining scientifically the medicine, which he should be taking for his own cure; or a chemist, analyzing the food which he should be eating for his nourishment; we are often only studying the Bible, when we ought to be believing in it, and rising, by an experimental acquaintance with it, into the pure element of devotion, and the sublime act of communion with God.

If I do not now offer any advice on other topics, it is because I should deem it an act of the highest presumption to give counsel on literary subjects to those who possess such advantages as are enjoyed by you, and because I feel myself ill qualified for such a task. On the business of personal religion I may be bold to address you, from some, though alas! too imperfect, an acquaintance with the subject; and because I do not

by such advice directly interfere with any of the especial duties of the professor's chair.

Receive then, my dear young brethren, the advice of one, who is most tenderly concerned for your welfare, and the welfare of the churches of Christ which are soon to be entrusted to your care; of one who, after twenty-four years' labour in no contracted sphere of ministerial exertion, can testify that while he has felt and deplored his deficiencies in many things, he has felt and deplored most of all his deficiency in personal religion; of one who, had he to begin life again, would strive, by God's help, after a far higher degree of literary and scientific acquirement; but who, with a keen perception of the just value of every thing comprehended within the wide range of learning and sound philosophy, still as clearly discerns the transcendent and paramount importance of experimental religion, as a qualification for the pastoral office.

I remain, my dear Brethren,
With much affection,
Your sincere friend,
J. A. J.

ON MINISTERIAL ATTENTION TO SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MINISTERIAL ATTENTION TO SUNDAY-SCHOOLS, ESPECIALLY IN OUR SMALLER CONGREGATIONS.

My mind has been much interested of late, in the condition and prospects of many of our congregations in the small towns and villages, where our denomination is opposed and oppressed by that species of modern persecution, so correctly and forcibly described by Dr. Vaughan in his recent tract on that subject. It is painful to a mind alive to the rights of conscience, and to the welfare of immortal souls, to witness the relentless hostility, the mean and paltry arts, and the petty spite, with which the efforts of our ministers to do good are resisted in those places, where clerical intolerance and ecclesiastical bigotry, by being condensed within narrow limits, become extraordinarily virulent, and I lament to say, far too successful. Under such circumstances, to look for much increase from the respectable portion of the inhabitants, is at present all but hopeless; it is with difficulty those are retained who are already with us. What, then, is to be done? To what source shall the pastor turn his attention, and what new means shall he try to recruit his wasting congregation, and fill the pews which bribery and intimidation have partially emptied or kept empty? I answer, let him look to the Sunday-school. It has long appeared to me that the pastors of our churches have been crim-

inally neglectful of this important system of religious instruction, and with guilty indifference have handed it over to whomsoever could be found to superintend it; forgetting that, as the ordained and recognised official teachers of the congregations, it is their business to see to, and in some way to superintend all the public religious instruction, which is carried on for and by their people. They cannot consistently let any system of religious teaching go on without taking a deep interest in it, and aiding and directing those who are engaged in it. What an important sphere of operation is a Sunday-school of two, three, or four hundred children, all of them immortal beings, assembled week after week, not merely to be taught the elements of general knowledge, but the principles of religion and the way of salvation. Is this a field of labour which any minister should pass by with indifference, as beneath his attention? Yet how many are there who rarely ever gladden the heart of a superintendent, or cheer the minds of the teachers, by a visit to the school, much less by a share in their labours!

But my object now is to direct the minds of the ministers in our smaller towns, to this sphere of hopeful labour. For some of us who are called by the Lord of the vineyard to occupy more public stations, and to preside over large churches, there is a little more excuse for neglecting Sunday-schools, than there is for those of our brethren placed in more secluded situations. Our hands are full, and we find our rest in change of labour; but for others, there is no defence. Let those who are sitting down in hopeless, heartless grief, at seeing all their efforts in the pulpit to fill their chapels frustrated; who are half-paralysed by high

church prejudice, and Puseyite intolerance; who, disheartened and dispirited, are looking about for some other and more likely scene of occupation, betake themselves to the Sunday-school, as to something better than the forlorn hope of recovering their congregation by large accessions from the wealthy adult population of the place.

It is not my intention, of course, to advise a neglect of pulpit preparation or pulpit exertion; on the contrary, I recommend a much higher degree of it than at present prevails; and, in many cases, the congregation would not be what it is, had its minister been as diligent a student, and as good a preacher as he might have been, and ought to have been. Nothing must divert the attention of our pastors from preaching. Well studied, simple, scriptural sermons, redolent with the savour of the knowledge of Christ, energetically and affectionately delivered, cannot be dispensed with; but even these are not enough, for prejudice and intolerance will keep the people from coming to hear them. What then, I ask again, is to be done to increase the congregation, and extend the sphere of ministerial labour and success? I reiterate the answer and advice, let our pastors turn more of their attention to the Sunday-schools.

Look at this subject in every aspect of it. In the first place, a school of almost any number, which the congregation and minister together can manage, may be, in most places, obtained. There are usually as many children to be found as all denominations can superintend. Secondly, It is a very likely means of doing good if well worked; which, indeed, is not generally the case. Nothing can be more inefficient than

the method of Sunday-school teaching, as it is conducted in many places. Even in this age of improvement the system, if that can be called a system, in which there is neither plan nor order, which is carried on in many schools is wretched. Some people seem to think that, provided a little mob of children are collected in one place, and a few ill-qualified young people are turned in among them to teach them to read, and lead them to chapel, there is a Sunday-school. But how much more than this is necessary, and how much more than this can now be supplied. The full efficacy of Sunday-school instruction remains yet, in most places, to be demonstrated. I could point to some places, where results have followed as gratifying as they are astonishing. Congregations which to all appearance were dead, have been quickened into life and have multiplied themselves by sending out the word of the Lord all around them. In these cases it is the minister that has taken the lead, considering the school as one great object of his ministry. And who that has ever yet devoted his energies, judiciously and perseveringly, to this plan of doing good, has not succeeded almost beyond his expectations? Thirdly, Consider the popularity of the system: it is the great favourite of the English people. The rich praise it, and the poor love it. There is scarcely anything which tells more upon the public mind in favour of a congregation, than a well-conducted Sunday-school. It is a charity, and charity conciliates esteem and regard. Fourthly, It produces attachment, if it be properly used for that purpose, both to the minister and the place, and that both in the minds of the parents and the children. If children are kindly used and well instructed, an agreeable association is

produced in their minds through life, with the spot where they were taught the elements of knowledge and led to the house of God. Advantage may be taken of this to give them an interest in a place and its ministry too strong for intolerance to subdue, or bigotry to corrupt. But it must be confessed and lamented, that, in too many cases, the work of instruction has been too superficially done. The conduct of the teachers has been too cold or too harsh, and the notice of the minister too rare and distant to leave any conviction of benefit, any sense of obligation, any pleasant recollections, and, in consequence, any permanent attachment.

Such is the system to which I am anxious that all our ministers should lend a helping hand, and to which I especially direct the attention of those who are nearly debarred from usefulness in other ways.

I now propose to consider in what way I think my brethren in the circumstances I have alluded to, may, with advantage, and without any encroachment on their other duties, devote their attention to the interests of the Sunday-schools, and render them subservient to the increase of their congregations.

1. They must be impressed with a due sense of the importance of Sunday-schools, not only on account of the children, their parents, and the community at large, but also in reference to the congregation which supports them. There must be no saying, "What will this do for me?" for such a sceptical survey of the system will paralyse effort. Sunday-schools are important; immensely important. The Church party see this, and are anxious to get the whole business of education into their hands; and they will make desperate efforts to accomplish their wishes. The clergy see the impor-

tance of it, and are everywhere busy in their Sunday-schools. To the many, who lazily exclaim, "What will this do for me?" I answer, "My brethren, you may, by God's blessing, revive your congregations and your churches by this means."

2. You must throw your hearts into the Sunday-school; and you must go to it with roused energies, determined purpose, and high expectations. If you cannot do this, you will do nothing. Better never touch the system, if you cannot carry to it a heart that is like a glowing coal of fire from the altar. Say to yourself, "I must recruit my congregation from this school; and I think, by God's grace, I can do it."

3. Study the philosophy of education, and the best systems of Sunday-school teaching. Make yourselves acquainted, both with general principles and with the details of operation. Read the Sunday-school periodicals, even the cheapest and the smallest of them, that you may be masters of the subject.

4. Win the confidence of the superintendents and teachers, as one who is able and willing to help them, advise them, and direct them, but one who has no disposition to supersede them, or lord it over them. You must have superintendents; they are in office already; and you cannot do without them; and any attempt to remove them, except they are obviously unfit or improper, would do mischief; nor must you do anything to lower, but everything to uphold and exalt them. Let them feel that you are their supporters and helps; and, in no sense, their supplanters. Hold frequent meetings with them, and talk over the matters of the school, and the plans of education. Offer your counsel mildly, not dictatorially; if it be wise, it will commend itself; and

thus let its own wisdom be its authority. Do not attempt to force anything. Superintendents and teachers are often jealously sensitive, even in reference to their ministers: you must be their friend, their father, their counsellor, but you must never attempt to be their master. If they esteem you, they will listen to your opinions with deference, and if they love you, they will do anything, in reason, to please you; but neither their affection nor their respect, nor both together, will allow you to tyrannise over them. To the teachers you must be kind, affable, encouraging. An occasional lecture and address to the whole body, to instruct and encourage them, will do great service, and increase your influence. It will be well for you to take them, especially the junior ones, under training, to qualify them more perfectly for their office.

5. Endeavour to render the system of education as complete as you can. Do not be satisfied with incomplete methods of instruction; but endeavour to introduce modern improvements: at the same time, never introduce new plans until you have obtained the concurrence, absolute or conditional, of the superintendents and teachers. You must lead, not drive; persuade, not compel.

6. Frequently address the children (collectively and separately,) by themselves, that you may adapt yourself to their capacity; and occasionally publicly also before the congregation, in the course of your ordinary ministrations; and be sure to let the schools have a share in your public prayers. You are free from the trammels of a liturgy, and can accommodate your prayers to any object or circumstance you please.

7. Have Bible Classes of your own, formed of

the elder children of both sexes, which you can meet on week-day evenings, when you can instruct and address them, and can especially attach to yourself those among them whose characters you can form and whose habits you may direct. Provide a good Sunday-school library, to furnish them with books to guide their reading, and impart to them some general knowledge of geography, astronomy, and such matters. Be the schoolmaster as well as the minister, and the father as well as the two others. Teach them to consider you as their good shepherd, that looks after them as his lambs. Will not this help them to resist intolerance and bigotry?

8. Follow them home to their houses; go and enquire about them of their parents; let it be seen and felt by their fathers and mothers, that you love them. Slide into the parents' hearts by means of the children. If they are sick, visit them and pray with them. If their parents go nowhere to worship, do not be too modest to ask them to come and worship with your congregation. It is no vanity, no violation of modesty, to say to an entire neglector of public worship, whose child attends your school, "Come to our place of worship, and hear me."

9. Frequently address the parents of the children, collectively, in your places of worship, by special invitation, and exert all your talent to give to those addresses a character of simplicity, pathos, and interest. Make them feel that you love both them and their children, and are anxious for their welfare for both worlds.

10. Engage on behalf of the children and their parents the sympathies of your flock, especially of the

wealthier members of the church and congregation. This is necessary, in order to resist those efforts which are made to entice the children away from your school, by the bribery frequently practised, in various ways, for this purpose. Bind them to you, by a sense of gratitude for favours conferred and interest taken.

11. Where it is possible, have a day-school, as well as Sunday-school; or, if this be not within your ability, endeavour to set up an evening school; for you are aware how extensively this is practised by our sagacious and persevering opponents.

12. I need scarcely add, let the Sunday-school be a subject of much private as well as public prayer to God for his blessing. Such efforts, so conducted, and sanctified by believing, fervent supplication, will not be in vain.

Bear with me, my beloved brethren, if I urge this upon your attention with some importunity. I know its importance. You know the opposition with which you have to contend, and how determined is the hostility which is brought to bear against you. Rise and gird yourselves manfully, and as a christian ministry should do, for your work. Without a spirit of holy, inventive, flexible, devoted zeal, you cannot stand; and with this, your Master will not let you fall. You must be servants of all work, and be able to turn your hands to any thing in the way of usefulness. I again say, as you must not neglect the pulpit, nor the study as the scene of pulpit preparation, so neither must you neglect the school. It is pitiable to see some men, restless, discontented, disheartened, in a small sphere of labour, yet neglecting the little they have to do, and sauntering away their time in heartless complaint and indolence,

instead of rousing their energies and taxing their faculties to strike out new courses of exertion. A man of ordinary invention, who loves work, will, any where and every where, find or make something to do in the way of useful labour, for the glory of God and the good of immortal souls; and let no one say, he has tried every means of doing good, till he has tried what he can do, in and by a well-conducted Sunday-school.

Your sincere Friend,

J. A. J.

END OF THE EIGHTH VOLUME.

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